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## Editorial

As Edward Buscombe notes in his article in this number of *Screen*, the reception of film, its recognition by viewers, the education system and the state, is dominated by an opposition that will not stand up to the most fleeting examination as an objective fact – the opposition between art and industry. This opposition is most directly reflected in film theory and criticism in the opposition between a *politique des auteurs* and an economics-sociology of film production which can never be made to meet. When in recent writings the notion of the director as author has been rejected as a reactionary adaptation from conventional art and especially literary criticism, the tendency has been to rush to the opposite extreme and read films as reflections of the society in which they were initially consumed or of the aims of owners of the industries which produced them. Buscombe's article concentrates on rebutting such simplistic theses in a particular case, that of Columbia Pictures before the Second World War. Other positions exist and have been more in evidence in *Screen* than either of these extremes, but they do not escape the opposition. Rather they are valuable in so far as they seek to argue not that films are the expressions of an author or commodities produced for profit, but on what conditions films as commodities produced for profit can become in ideology the expressions of authors, that is to say, how films can be works of art in a capitalist-dominated world. Such arguments bring out the contradictions of capitalist artistic production and its products, contradictions that can be exploited in current practice, whether that practice be film reception or film making.

The other articles in this number illustrate various facets of such a concern. Peter Baxter, a Canadian who has studied film at the Slade, shows from a detailed examination of the development of lighting techniques in film up to the 1920's and of contemporary estimates of the aims and achievements of that lighting, how the history of film technology cannot be separated from its aesthetic determinants, and how these are in turn determined by a developing ideology of art. Edward Branigan, a student at the University



of Wisconsin, Madison, provides an analysis into its elements of 5  
one of the most important conventions of the traditional cinema,  
the point-of-view shot, important because it links one of the  
specific features of the film, the mobile representation of fictional  
space, with the problematic of voice and identification, of  
expression and representation of the subject, which is such a crucial  
part of literary and theatrical narrative; the analysis enables him  
to show how, by varying the elements, the convention can be  
stylistically modified or subverted. Identification and point of view  
are also considered by Laura Mulvey, co-director of *Penthesilea*, in  
her article on scopophilia in the cinema; using psychoanalytic  
concepts, she argues that the visual pleasures offered by the  
traditional cinema reflect contradictions inherent in the patriarchal  
psychical order dominant in our societies, and that film theory  
should not celebrate these pleasures but expose their mechanisms,  
while film-making should aim to undermine these mechanisms, even  
at the cost of cinematic pleasure itself. And in an article drawing  
on her work on the total textual history of *Peter Pan*, Jacqueline  
Rose demonstrates that the fiction of the boy who did not grow  
up is a textual fact, generating the constant adaptations to different  
media that *Peter Pan* has undergone and posing certain problems  
to the media to which it has been adapted; the scenario Barrie  
himself wrote for the film handles these problems in terms of the  
special effect, whereas the team that adapted it for Paramount's  
1924 film, working in an aesthetic-cum-technical context which  
was in many respects more limited than what Barrie had envisaged,  
reproduced these problems in a quite different way.

Finally, we are glad to be able to publish a talk given by Raymond Bellour at a seminar organised by *Screen* and the Educational Advisory Service of the BFI at the National Film Theatre on the specific problems film raises for those engaged in its textual analysis.

BEN BREWSTER

The Editorial Board would like to draw it to our readers' attention that as of October 1975 the Society for Education in Film and Television, and hence the offices of *Screen* and *Screen Education*, are moving to 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL

The telephone numbers will remain as before 01-734-5455/3211

## Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema

Laura Mulvey

### 1 Introduction

#### A. *A Political Use of Psychoanalysis*

This paper intends to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him. It takes as starting point the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle. It is helpful to understand what the cinema has been, how its magic has worked in the past, while attempting a theory and a practice which will challenge this cinema of the past. Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.

The paradox of phallocentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynch pin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. Recent writing in *Screen* about psychoanalysis and the cinema has not sufficiently brought out the importance of the representation of the female form in a symbolic order in which, in the last resort, it speaks castration and nothing else. To summarise briefly: the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is two-fold, she first symbolises the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory which oscillates between memory of maternal

plenitude and memory of lack. Both are posited on nature (or on anatomy in Freud's famous phrase). Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. 7

There is an obvious interest in this analysis for feminists, a beauty in its exact rendering of the frustration experienced under the phallogentric order. It gets us nearer to the roots of our oppression, it brings an articulation of the problem closer, it faces us with the ultimate challenge: how to fight the unconscious structured like a language (formed critically at the moment of arrival of language) while still caught within the language of the patriarchy. There is no way in which we can produce an alternative out of the blue, but we can begin to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides, of which psychoanalysis is not the only but an important one. We are still separated by a great gap from important issues for the female unconscious which are scarcely relevant to phallogentric theory: the sexing of the female infant and her relationship to the symbolic, the sexually mature woman as non-mother, maternity outside the signification of the phallus, the vagina. . . . But, at this point, psychoanalytic theory as it now stands can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught.

### *B. Destruction of Pleasure as a Radical Weapon*

As an advanced representation system, the cinema poses questions of the ways the unconscious (formed by the dominant order) structures ways of seeing and pleasure in looking. Cinema has changed over the last few decades. It is no longer the monolithic system based on large capital investment exemplified at its best by Hollywood in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. Technological advances (16mm, etc) have changed the economic conditions of cinematic production, which can now be artisanal as well as capitalist. Thus it has been possible for an alternative cinema to develop. However self-conscious and ironic Hollywood managed to be, it always restricted itself to a formal mise-en-scène reflecting the dominant ideological concept of the cinema. The alternative cinema provides a space for a cinema to be born which is radical in both a political

8 and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film. This is not to reject the latter moralistically, but to highlight the ways in which its formal preoccupations reflect the psychological obsessions of the society which produced it, and, further, to stress that the alternative cinema must start specifically by reacting against these obsessions and assumptions. A politically and aesthetically avant-garde cinema is now possible, but it can still only exist as a counterpoint.

The magic of the Hollywood style at its best (and of all the cinema which fell within its sphere of influence) arose, not exclusively, but in one important aspect, from its skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure. Unchallenged, mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. In the highly developed Hollywood cinema it was only through these codes that the alienated subject, torn in his imaginary memory by a sense of loss, by the terror of potential lack in phantasy, came near to finding a glimpse of satisfaction: through its formal beauty and its play on his own formative obsessions. This article will discuss the interweaving of that erotic pleasure in film, its meaning, and in particular the central place of the image of woman. It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty, destroys it. That is the intention of this article. The satisfaction and reinforcement of the ego that represent the high point of film history hitherto must be attacked. Not in favour of a reconstructed new pleasure, which cannot exist in the abstract, nor of intellectualised unpleasure, but to make way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude of the narrative fiction film. The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past behind without rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, or daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire.

## II Pleasure in Looking/Fascination with the Human Form

A. The cinema offers a number of possible pleasures. One is scopophilia. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at. Originally, in his *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud isolated scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones. At this point he associated scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. His particular examples centre around the voyeuristic activities of children, their desire to see and make sure of the private and the forbidden (curiosity about other people's genital and bodily functions, about the presence or absence of the

penis and, retrospectively, about the primal scene). In this analysis 9  
scopophilia is essentially active. (Later, in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, Freud developed his theory of scopophilia further, attaching it initially to pre-genital auto-eroticism, after which the pleasure of the look is transferred to others by analogy. There is a close working here of the relationship between the active instinct and its further development in a narcissistic form.) Although the instinct is modified by other factors, in particular the constitution of the ego, it continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object. At the extreme, it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other.

At first glance, the cinema would seem to be remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim. What is seen of the screen is so manifestly shown. But the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic phantasy. Moreover, the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of the shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation. Although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world. Among other things, the position of the spectators in the cinema is blatantly one of repression of their exhibitionism and projection of the repressed desire on to the performer.

B. The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world. Jacques Lacan has described how the moment when a child recognises its own image in the mirror is crucial for the constitution of the ego. Several aspects of this analysis are relevant here. The mirror phase occurs at a time when the child's physical ambitions outstrip his motor capacity, with the result that his recognition of himself is joyous in that he imagines his mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than he experiences his own body. Recognition is thus overlaid with mis-recognition: the image recognised is conceived

- 10 as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects this body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject, which, re-introjected as an ego ideal, gives rise to the future generation of identification with others. This mirror-moment predates language for the child.

Important for this article is the fact that it is an image that constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition/misrecognition and identification, and hence of the first articulation of the 'I', of subjectivity. This is a moment when an older fascination with looking (at the mother's face, for an obvious example) collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness. Hence it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience. Quite apart from the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror (the framing of the human form in its surroundings, for instance), the cinema has structures of fascination strong enough to allow temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego. The sense of forgetting the world as the ego has subsequently come to perceive it (I forgot who I am and where I was) is nostalgically reminiscent of that pre-subjective moment of image recognition. At the same time the cinema has distinguished itself in the production of ego ideals as expressed in particular in the star system, the stars centring both screen presence and screen story as they act out a complex process of likeness and difference (the glamorous impersonates the ordinary).

C. Sections II. A and B have set out two contradictory aspects of the pleasurable structures of looking in the conventional cinematic situation. The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen. Thus, in film terms, one implies a separation of the erotic identity of the subject from the object on the screen (active scopophilia), the other demands identification of the ego with the object on the screen through the spectator's fascination with and recognition of his like. The first is a function of the sexual instincts, the second of ego libido. This dichotomy was crucial for Freud. Although he saw the two as interacting and overlaying each other, the tension between instinctual drives and self-preservation continues to be a dramatic polarisation in terms of pleasure. Both are formative structures, mechanisms not meaning. In themselves they have no signification, they have to be attached to an idealisation. Both pursue aims in indifference to perceptual reality, creating the imagised, eroticised concept of the world that forms the perception of the subject and makes a mockery of empirical objectivity.

During its history, the cinema seems to have evolved a particular illusion of reality in which this contradiction between libido and ego has found a beautifully complementary phantasy world. In *reality* the phantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it.. Sexual instincts and identification processes have a meaning within the symbolic order which articulates desire. Desire, born with language, allows the possibility of transcending the instinctual and the imaginary, but its point of reference continually returns to the traumatic moment of its birth: the castration complex. Hence the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox. 11

### III Woman as Image, Man as Bearer of the Look

A. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative. (Note, however, how in the musical song-and-dance numbers break the flow of the diegesis.) The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative. As Budd Boetticher has put it:

'What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.'

(A recent tendency in narrative film has been to dispense with this problem altogether; hence the development of what Molly Haskell has called the 'buddy movie', in which the active homosexual eroticism of the central male figures can carry the story without distraction.) Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the

- 12 screen. For instance, the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no-man's-land outside its own time and space. Thus Marilyn Monroe's first appearance in *The River of No Return* and Lauren Bacall's songs in *To Have or Have Not*. Similarly, conventional close-ups of legs (Dietrich, for instance) or a face (Garbo) integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism. One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen.

B. An active/passive heterosexual division of labour has similarly controlled narrative structure. According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like. Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's role as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralise the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify. As the spectator identifies with the main male<sup>1</sup> protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence. A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of the gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror. The character in the story can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator, just as the image in the mirror was more in control of motor co-ordination. In contrast to woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-

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1. There are films with a woman as main protagonist, of course. To analyse this phenomenon seriously here would take me too far afield. Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's study of *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* in Phil Hardy, ed: *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh 1974, shows in a striking case how the strength of this female protagonist is more apparent than real.



dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror-recognition 13  
in which the alienated subject internalised his own representation  
of this imaginary existence. He is a figure in a landscape. Here the  
function of film is to reproduce as accurately as possible the so-  
called natural conditions of human perception. Camera technology  
(as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera move-  
ments (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with  
invisible editing (demanded by realism) all tend to blur the limits  
of screen space. The male protagonist is free to command the stage,  
a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and  
creates the action.

C.1 Sections III. A and B have set out a tension between a mode  
of representation of woman in film and conventions surrounding the  
diegesis. Each is associated with a look: that of the spectator in  
direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his  
enjoyment (connoting male phantasy) and that of the spectator  
fascinated with the image of his like set in an illusion of natural  
space, and through him gaining control and possession of the  
woman within the diegesis. (This tension and the shift from one  
pole to the other can structure a single text. Thus both in *Only  
Angels Have Wings* and in *To Have and Have Not*, the film opens  
with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and  
all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous,  
on display, sexualised. But as the narrative progresses she falls in  
love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property,  
losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalised  
sexuality, her show-girl connotations; her eroticism is subjected to  
the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through  
participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess  
her too.)

But in psychoanalytic terms, the female figure poses a deeper  
problem. She also connotes something that the look continually  
circles around but disavows: her lack of a penis, implying a threat  
of castration and hence unpleasure. Ultimately, the meaning of  
woman is sexual difference, the absence of the penis as visually  
ascertainable, the material evidence on which is based the castra-  
tion complex essential for the organisation of entrance to the sym-  
bolic order and the law of the father. Thus the woman as icon,  
displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers  
of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally  
signified. The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from  
this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of  
the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her  
mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving  
of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the *film  
noir*); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution

14 of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation, the cult of the female star). This second avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself. The first avenue, voyeurism, on the contrary, has associations with sadism: pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. This sadistic side fits in well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end. Fetishistic scopophilia, on the other hand, can exist outside linear time as the erotic instinct is focussed on the look alone. These contradictions and ambiguities can be illustrated more simply by using works by Hitchcock and Sternberg, both of whom take the look almost as the content or subject matter of many of their films. Hitchcock is the more complex, as he uses both mechanisms. Sternberg's work, on the other hand, provides many pure examples of fetishistic scopophilia.

C.2 It is well known that Sternberg once said he would welcome his films being projected upside down so that story and character involvement would not interfere with the spectator's undiluted appreciation of the screen image. This statement is revealing but ingenuous. Ingenuous in that his films do demand that the figure of the woman (Dietrich, in the cycle of films with her, as the ultimate example) should be identifiable. But revealing in that it emphasises the fact that for him the pictorial space enclosed by the frame is paramount rather than narrative or identification processes. While Hitchcock goes into the investigative side of voyeurism, Sternberg produces the ultimate fetish, taking it to the point where the powerful look of the male protagonist (characteristic of traditional narrative film) is broken in favour of the image in direct erotic rapport with the spectator. The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look. Sternberg plays down the illusion of screen depth; his screen tends to be one-dimensional, as light and shade, lace, steam, foliage, net, streamers, etc. reduce the visual field. There is little or no mediation of the look through the eyes of the main male protagonist. On the contrary, shadowy presences like La Bessière in *Morocco* act as surrogates for the director, detached as they are from audience identification. Despite Sternberg's insistence that his stories are irrelevant, it is significant that they are concerned with situation, not suspense, and cyclical

rather than linear time, while plot complications revolve around misunderstanding rather than conflict. The most important absence is that of the controlling male gaze within the screen scene. The high point of emotional drama in the most typical Dietrich films, her supreme moments of erotic meaning, take place in the absence of the man she loves in the fiction. There are other witnesses, other spectators watching her on the screen, their gaze is one with, not standing in for, that of the audience. At the end of *Morocco*, Tom Brown has already disappeared into the desert when Amy Jolly kicks off her gold sandals and walks after him. At the end of *Dishonoured*, Kranau is indifferent to the fate of Magda. In both cases, the erotic impact, sanctified by death, is displayed as a spectacle for the audience. The male hero misunderstands and, above all, does not see.

In Hitchcock, by contrast, the male hero does see precisely what the audience sees. However, in the films I shall discuss here, he takes fascination with an image through scopophilic eroticism as the subject of the film. Moreover, in these cases the hero portrays the contradictions and tensions experienced by the spectator. In *Vertigo* in particular, but also in *Marnie* and *Rear Window*, the look is central to the plot, oscillating between voyeurism and fetishistic fascination. As a twist, a further manipulation of the normal viewing process which in some sense reveals it, Hitchcock uses the process of identification normally associated with ideological correctness and the recognition of established morality and shows up its perverted side. Hitchcock has never concealed his interest in voyeurism, cinematic and non-cinematic. His heroes are exemplary of the symbolic order and the law – a policeman (*Vertigo*), a dominant male possessing money and power (*Marnie*) – but their erotic drives lead them into compromised situations. The power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically is turned on to the woman as the object of both. Power is backed by a certainty of legal right and the established guilt of the woman (evoking castration, psychoanalytically speaking). True perversion is barely concealed under a shallow mask of ideological correctness – the man is on the right side of the law, the woman on the wrong. Hitchcock's skilful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze. The audience is absorbed into a voyeuristic situation within the screen scene and diegesis which parodies his own in the cinema. In his analysis of *Rear Window*, Douchet takes the film as a metaphor for the cinema. Jeffries is the audience, the events in the apartment block opposite correspond to the screen. As he watches, an erotic dimension is added to his look, a central image to the drama. His girlfriend Lisa had been of little sexual interest to him, more or less a drag, so long as she remained on the spectator side. When she

16 crosses the barrier between his room and the block opposite, their relationship is re-born erotically. He does not merely watch her through his lens, as a distant meaningful image, he also sees her as a guilty intruder exposed by a dangerous man threatening her with punishment, and thus finally save her. Lisa's exhibitionism has already been established by her obsessive interest in dress and style, in being a passive image of visual perfection; Jeffries' voyeurism and activity have also been established through his work as a photo-journalist, a maker of stories and captor of images. However, his enforced inactivity, binding him to his seat as a spectator, puts him squarely in the phantasy position of the cinema audience.

In *Vertigo*, subjective camera predominates. Apart from one flash-back from Judy's point of view, the narrative is woven around what Scottie sees or fails to see. The audience follows the growth of his erotic obsession and subsequent despair precisely from his point of view. Scottie's voyeurism is blatant: he falls in love with a woman he follows and spies on without speaking to. Its sadistic side is equally blatant: he has chosen (and freely chosen, for he had been a successful lawyer) to be a policeman, with all the attendant possibilities of pursuit and investigation. As a result, he follows, watches and falls in love with a perfect image of female beauty and mystery. Once he actually confronts her, his erotic drive is to break her down and force her to tell by persistent cross-questioning. Then, in the second part of the film, he re-enacts his obsessive involvement with the image he loved to watch secretly. He reconstructs Judy as Madeleine, forces her to conform in every detail to the actual physical appearance of his fetish. Her exhibitionism, her masochism, make her an ideal passive counterpart to Scottie's active sadistic voyeurism. She knows her part is to perform, and only by playing it through and then replaying it can she keep Scottie's erotic interest. But in the repetition he does break her down and succeeds in exposing her guilt. His curiosity wins through and she is punished. In *Vertigo*, erotic involvement with the look is disorientating: the spectator's fascination is turned against him as the narrative carries him through and entwines him with the processes that he is himself exercising. The Hitchcock hero here is firmly placed within the symbolic order, in narrative terms. He has all the attributes of the patriarchal super-ego. Hence the spectator, lulled into a false sense of security by the apparent legality of his surrogate, sees through his look and finds himself exposed as complicit, caught in the moral ambiguity of looking. Far from being simply an aside on the perversion of the police, *Vertigo* focuses on the implications of the active/looking, passive/looked-at split in terms of sexual difference and the power of the male symbolic encapsulated in the hero. Marnie, too, performs for Mark Rutland's gaze and masquerades as the perfect to-be-looked-at image. He, too, is on the side of the law until, drawn in by

obsession with her guilt, her secret, he longs to see her in the act of committing a crime, make her confess and thus save her. So he, too, becomes complicit as he acts out the implications of his power. He controls money and words, he can have his cake and eat it. 17

### III Summary

The psychoanalytic background that has been discussed in this article is relevant to the pleasure and unpleasure offered by traditional narrative film. The scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object), and, in contradistinction, ego libido (forming identification processes) act as formations, mechanisms, which this cinema has played on. The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form – illusionistic narrative film. The argument returns again to the psychoanalytic background in that woman as representation signifies castration, inducing voyeuristic or fetishistic mechanisms to circumvent her threat. None of these interacting layers is intrinsic to film, but it is only in the film form that they can reach a perfect and beautiful contradiction, thanks to the possibility in the cinema of shifting the emphasis of the look. It is the place of the look that defines cinema, the possibility of varying it and exposing it. This is what makes cinema quite different in its voyeuristic potential from, say, striptease, theatre, shows, etc. Going far beyond highlighting a woman's to-be-looked-at-ness, cinema builds the way she is to be looked at into the spectacle itself. Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. It is these cinematic codes and their relationship to formative external structures that must be broken down before mainstream film and the pleasure it provides can be challenged.

To begin with (as an ending), the voyeuristic-scopophilic look that is a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure can itself be broken down. There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion. The conventions of narrative film deny the first two and subordinate them to the third, the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience. Without these two absences (the material existence of the recording

18 process, the critical reading of the spectator), fictional drama cannot achieve reality, obviousness and truth. Nevertheless, as this article has argued, the structure of looking in narrative fiction film contains a contradiction in its own premises: the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish. Thus the two looks materially present in time and space are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego. The camera becomes the mechanism for producing an illusion of Renaissance space, flowing movements compatible with the human eye, an ideology of representation that revolves around the perception of the subject; the camera's look is disavowed in order to create a convincing world in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude. Simultaneously, the look of the audience is denied an intrinsic force: as soon as fetishistic representation of the female image threatens to break the spell of illusion, and the erotic image on the screen appears directly (without mediation) to the spectator, the fact of fetishisation, concealing as it does castration fear, freezes the look, fixates the spectator and prevents him from achieving any distance from the image in front of him.

This complex interaction of looks is specific to film. The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions (already undertaken by radical film-makers) is to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the 'invisible guest', and highlights how film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret.<sup>2</sup>

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2. This article is a reworked version of a paper given in the French Department of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the Spring of 1973.

## The Unattainable Text

Raymond Bellour

That the film is a text, in the sense in which Barthes uses the word, is obvious enough. That as such it might, or should, receive the same kind of attention as has been devoted to the literary text is also obvious. But already not quite so obvious. We shall soon see why.

The text of the film is indeed an unattainable text. In saying this, despite the temptation of a play on words, I do not mean to evoke the special difficulties which very often make it impossible to obtain the film in the material sense or the proper conditions to constitute it into a text, ie the editing table or the projector with freeze-frame facility. These difficulties are still enormous: they are very often discouraging, and go a long way to explaining the comparative backwardness of film studies. However, one can imagine, if still only hypothetically, that one day, at the price of a few changes, the film will find something that is hard to express, a status analogous to that of the book or rather that of the gramophone record with respect to the concert. If film studies are still done then, they will undoubtedly be more numerous, more imaginative, more accurate and above all more enjoyable than the ones we carry out in fear and trembling, threatened continually with dispossession of the object. And yet, curious as it might seem, the situation of the film analyst, even when he does possess the film, any film, will not change in every particular.

I shall not linger over the indisputable fact that one does not have the text, the 'methodological field', the 'production', the 'traversal', as Barthes puts it, when one has the work, the 'fragment of substance'.<sup>1</sup> But without going into the theoretical labyrinths opened up by the notion of the text, I shall stress two

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1. 'De l'œuvre au texte,' *Revue d'Esthétique* n 3, 1971. The quotations that follow are taken from this same article.

20 things. On the one hand the material possession of the work alone permits one full access to the textual fiction, since it alone allows one a full experience of the multiplicity of operations carried out in the work and makes it precisely into a text. On the other, as soon as one studies a work, quotes a fragment of it, one has implicitly taken up a textual perspective, even if feebly and one-dimensionally, even if in a restrictive and regressive fashion, even if one continues to close the text back onto itself although it is, as Barthes has insisted, and before him, Blanchot, the locus of an unbounded openness. That is why it is possible, in a slide which is both justified and somewhat abusive, like all slides, to speak of quoting the text when by text one means work, even if at a later stage one may be driven, as Barthes has been, to think the literary experience from the starting-point of an opposition between the work and the text. In connection with these terms, but without evading them, I should just like to emphasise here an elementary fatality: the text of the film is unattainable because it is an unquotable text. To this extent, and to this extent only, the word text as applied to film is metaphorical; it clearly pin-points the paradox which inflicts the filmic text and to such a degree only the filmic text.

When one chooses to read, to study a work, to recognise in it the pressure of the text, so close in a sense to what Blanchot has conceptualised as literature, nothing is more immediate, simpler than to quote a word, a phrase, a few lines, a sentence, a page. Omit the quotation marks that signal it and the quotation is invisible, it is quite naturally absorbed into the page. Despite the change of regime it introduces, it does not really break up the reading; it even helps to make description, analysis a special form of discourse, in the best of cases a new text, by a reduplication whose fascination has been fully felt by modern thought. This effect is obviously peculiar to the literary work, more generally to the written work, and to it alone. It lies in the undivided conformity of the object of study and the means of study, in the absolute material coincidence between language and language. That is why only the written work was able to provide, so to speak, a pretext for a theory of the text, or at least for the first effects of its practice. That is why Barthes so strongly distrusts everything that escapes the written, for the meta-language effect is more tangible there, by definition. Indeed, one speaks the more 'about' an object the less one can draw it into the material body of the commentary. At the same time this is obviously to emphasise the absolute privilege of written expression in this conversion of the work into a text. The material reality of a commentary which in its turn comes to have more or less the function of a text constitutes the necessary mediation for this transmutation which in the last instance would like to appear in the absolute guise of a play. That is to say that in fact it aims for an integral reconciliation



between language and language, and between the subject and the subject, receiving from the exteriority of language the absolution that would restore it to its desire. For clarity's sake, one thing should be remembered. This idea arises with the joint emergence of the two concepts literature and science of literature. It arose for the first time, in a still uncertain fashion, with romanticism and the beginnings of literary criticism; a second time at the turn of the century in the first great mutual concussion of literature and the human sciences, in Nietzsche and Mallarmé, Freud and Saussure; a third time today under the internal and external pressure exercised on literature by what Barthes has called 'the conjoint action of Marxism, psycho-analysis and structuralism'. To sum up, let us say that the science of literature has enabled us to recognise in the work the reality and the utopia of the text, but this movement has no meaning unless it dissolves the science into the body of its object, to the extent, in the ideal case, of abolishing any divergence between science and literature, analysis and the work.<sup>2</sup>

It is from the starting point of this both real and mythical level that the apparently quite secondary fact of the possibility of quotation turns out to assign a paradoxical specificity to the cinematic text. The written text is the only one that can be quoted unimpededly and unreservedly. But the filmic text does not have the same differential relations with the written text as the pictorial text, the musical text, the theatrical text (and all the intermediate mixed texts they give rise to). The pictorial text is in fact a quotable text. No doubt the quotation stands out in its heterogeneity, its difference; no doubt there are many material difficulties in its way, difficulties expressing the specifically material loss undergone by the work from the very fact of its reproduction. The format of the book in particular, always reductive, obviously produces an inevitable distortion through the disproportion between the original and its reproduction. But the quotation is on the other hand perfectly satisfactory, allowing a remarkable play on the detail with respect to the whole. From the critical point of view it has one

2. 'In its own way the text shares in a social utopia; before History (always supposing the latter does not choose barbarism), the Text achieves, if not the transparency of social relations, at least that of relations of language: it is the space in which no language has an edge on any other, in which languages circulate (retaining the circular sense of the term). . . . A theory of the Text cannot be satisfied with a metalinguistic exposition; to destroy metalanguage, or at least (for it may be necessary to resort to it for the time being) to cast suspicion on it, is part of the aim of the theory itself: discourse about the Text should never be anything but text itself, textual research and travail, since the Text is that *social* space that allows no language any shelter outside it, nor any subject of enunciation in the position of judge, teacher, analyst, confessor, decipherer: the theory of the Text cannot but coincide with a practice of writing.'

22 advantage that only painting possesses: one can see and take in the work at one glance. Which literary analysis cannot do, except when it has as its object short poems in which vision and reading are superimposed (eg Ruwet's, Lévi-Strauss's and Jakobson's analyses of Baudelaire sonnets). Beyond these, even when it chooses to quote 'the whole text' in limit-case experiments like Barthes's in *S/Z*, it can only rediscover the inevitable linearity of the written.

The musical text, conversely, sets two obstacles in the way of quotation. First, at the level of the score. This is certainly quotable, in whole or in part, like the literary text. But it opposes an infinitely greater heterogeneity to language than that of the picture; that of a specific codification whose extreme technicality marks a break. On the other hand, and much more profoundly (for a society in which everyone could read music is conceivable – was this not the case in the micro-societies of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie?), the musical text is divided, since the score is not the performance. But sound cannot be quoted. It cannot be described or evoked. In this the musical text is irreducible to the text, even if it is, metaphorically, and in reality thanks to the plurality of its operations, just as textual as the literary text. With the one difference that it cannot really be experienced except by hearing it, and never by analysing it, subjecting it to a reading, since then one is no longer hearing it, or only hearing it virtually. Finally, one last problem and not the least: the score is fixed but performance changes. Some more or less aleatoric types of modern music which increase this gap between score and performance take the phenomenon to an extreme, but do not change its terms. The work is unstable. In a sense this mobility increases even further the degree of textuality of the musical work, since the text, as Barthes has said again and again, is mobility itself. But by a kind of paradox, this mobility cannot be reduced to the language which attempts to grasp it in order to bring it out by duplication. In this the musical text is less textual than are the pictorial text and above all the literary text, whose mobility is in some sense inversely proportional to the fixity of the work. The possibility of keeping to the letter of the text is in fact the condition of its possibility.

The theatrical text demonstrates the same paradox and the same division, although in a different way. On the one hand, the work, the text in the ordinary sense of the term, can be reduced unequivocally to the problematic of the literary text, except that the play more or less inevitably brings with it the absence of its performance. On the other, the performance creates a mobile text, as open and aleatoric as that of the musical text. A *mise-en-scène* can be discussed, its principles stated, its novelty, its uniqueness felt, but it cannot really be described or quoted. Its textuality, though indisputable, escapes the text once again through its infinite mobility, the too radical divergence between the text which provides it with a pretext and a material and vocal figurability

without any real delimitation. At most, just as the gramophone 23  
record has become the fixed memory of the concert, making an  
end if not of the variety of interpretations, at least of the internal  
variability of each performance, one might imagine fixing some  
mise-en-scène, as has been done on all too few occasions, by the  
only means apt to reproduce it: the film. Which, pushing aside the  
problem of the theatre, automatically reinforces the paradoxical  
uniqueness of the cinema.

Indeed, the film presents the remarkable speciality, for a spec-  
tacle, of being a fixed work. The scenario, the initial technical cut,  
are indeed not absolutely comparable with the score or the  
theatrical play. They are pro-texts, as, without being similar, plans  
and drafts are for the written work, sketches for a picture. Per-  
formance, in the film, is annihilated in the same way, to the  
advantage of the immutability of the work. This immutability, as  
we have seen, is a paradoxical precondition for the conversion  
of the work into a text, insofar as, if only by the abutment it  
constitutes, it favours the possibility of a voyage through language  
which unties and reties the many operations by which the work is  
made into a text. But this movement, which brings the film closer  
to the picture and the book, is at the same time a broadly con-  
tradictory one: indeed, the text of the film never fails to escape  
the language that constitutes it. In a sense one can no more quote  
a film than one can a musical work or a theatrical production.  
However, this is not quite true. The analysis of the film suffers  
the force of this paradox, which derives from the perfect delimita-  
tion of the work, but equally from the mixture of materials whose  
location is the cinema.

Once it is a talking cinema, it conjoins five matters of expression,  
as Christian Metz has shown: phonetic sound, written titles,  
musical sound, noises, the moving photographic image. The first  
two of these pose no apparent problems for quotation. Nothing is  
more easily reproduced than the dialogue of a film: publishers  
know what they are doing when they imply, as they often do, that  
they are recreating the film for us by printing its dialogue and  
playing a dubious game with the image to recreate that absolutely  
illusory thing known as its story. But it is quite obvious that  
something is lost thereby: written titles belong fully to the written,  
dialogue both to sound and to the written (it was written before  
being spoken, and even if it is improvised, it can be transcribed,  
since it does not change). Thus it undergoes a considerable reduc-  
tion as soon as it is quoted: it loses tone, intensities, timbres,  
itches, everything that constitutes the profound solidity of the  
voice. The same is true of noises, except that it is much less easy  
to reduce them to the signified, since this reduction can only be  
a translation, a kind of paraphrastic evocation. In this respect,  
what might be called motivated noise, which can always be evoked  
more or less since it indicates the real, should always be dis-

24 tinguished from arbitrary noise, which can go so far as to serve as a score, then escaping all translatability since it is not even codified as the musical score is (confining ourselves for simplification's sake to music in which the score is still truly determinant). Note that these are only two extremes, extremes which can be inverted: an arbitrary, but simple noise can be delimited, while a motivated but overcomplex one cannot. How in an analysis is one to deal with the noise band of a film like *La mort en ce jardin*, for example, made up solely of the noises of the Amazon forest, but so rich that it substitutes more or less for music? The bird calls in *The Birds* can be thought of in the same way; orchestrated by Robert Burks, thanks to the possibilities of electronic sound, they constitute a true score in this film from which music is apparently absent. In short, noise constitutes a greater obstacle to the textuality of the film the more it is one of the major instruments of its textual materiality. Musical sound obviously takes this divergence between text and text to the extreme: given the specifications implied by the phenomenon of combination which makes film music not a work in itself but an internal dimension of the work, we have here again the problems posed in this respect by musical works. With one difference, and by no means a negligible one. If the division between score and performance, code and sound, remains an integral one, here the musical text is received, thanks to a petrification seemingly opposed to its very virtuality, in that immutability of the work which defines the film.

There remains the image. And with it, rightly or wrongly, the essential. First for a historical reason: for thirty years, with the indispensable support of written titles (and not counting the intermittent assistance of a music outside the material specificity of the work), it represented the film, all films: the cinema. To the extent that even today it is too often confused with it, by an excessive simplification the *a priori* assumptions of which have been unravelled by Christian Metz. The unique situation of the image among the cinema's matters of expression will perhaps allow us, if not to excuse this excess, at least to understand it. The image is indeed located, with respect to the echo it might receive from language, half-way between the semi-transparency of written titles and dialogue and the more or less complete opacity of music and noise. Moreover, it is this which quite logically gives the image as such, as a moving image, the highest degree of cinematic specificity among the matters of expression whose combination, on the other hand, creates many more or less specifically cinematic co-ordinations. Until very recently, no doubt, this insistence on the specificity of the image was usually a convenient pretext to subtract the film from any true critical undertaking and to negotiate, as it were, the image in terms of the scenario, ie of contents, themes. But over and above its distortions, its inadequacies, which are as negative as they are idealist, this contradiction did confusedly

express something absolutely essential: a highly paradoxical relationship between the moving image and the language which seeks to reveal in the film the filmic text itself. This has been clearly seen since the area was turned upside down by the semiology of the cinema and the first true textual analyses. It is no accident that the only code constituted by Christian Metz has been a syntagmatics of the image band, and if most analyses have concentrated, with a kind of quite explicable impatience and fascination, on the textual workings of the image as it were, expressing a voluntarily agreed restriction that clearly never ceases to transgress its limit, since that limit is illusory.

This restriction and fascination derive from the paradox introduced by the moving image. On the one hand it spreads in space like a picture; on the other it plunges into time, like a story which its serialisation into units approximates more or less to the musical work. In this it is peculiarly unquotable, since the written text cannot restore to it what only the projector can produce; a movement, the illusion of which guarantees the reality. That is why the reproduction even of many stills only ever reveals a kind of radical inability to assume the textuality of the film. However, stills are essential. Indeed they represent an equivalent, arranged each time according to the needs of the reading, to freeze-frames on the editing table, with the absolutely contradictory function of opening up the textuality of the film just at the moment they interrupt its unfolding. In a sense it is really what is done when stopping at a sentence in a book to re-read it and reflect on it. But then it is not the same movement that is frozen. Continuity is suspended, meaning fragmented; but the material specificity of a means of expression is not interfered with in the same way. The cinema, through the moving image, is the only art of time which, when we go against the principle on which it is based, still turns out to give us something to see, and moreover something which alone allows us to feel its textuality fully: a theatrical play cannot be stopped, unless it has been filmed, nor can a concert, and if a gramophone record is stopped there is simply nothing left to hear. That is why it turns out that despite what it does allow, the gramophone record (or the recording tape), which might seem the magical instrument of musical analysis, only apparently resolves a basic contradiction, that of sound. The frozen frame and the still that reproduces it are simulacra; obviously they never prevent the film from escaping, but paradoxically they allow it to escape as a text. Obviously the language of the analysis is responsible for the rest. It attempts to link together the multiplicity of textual operations between the simulacra of the frozen images like any other analysis. But the analysis of the film thus receives its portion of an inevitability known to no other: not to literary analysis, which constantly makes language return freely to language; nor to the analysis of the picture, which can partly or wholly re-establish

26 its object in the space of the commentary; nor to musical analysis, irreducibly divided between the accuracy of a score and the otherness of a performance; nor to that of theatrical representation, where the same division is at once less complete and less precise. In fact, filmic analysis, if it is to take place at all, must take upon itself this rhythmical as well as figurative and actantial narrative component for which the stills are the simulacra, indispensable but already derisory in comparison with what they represent. Thus it constantly mimics, evokes, describes; in a kind of principled despair it can but try frantically to compete with the object it is attempting to understand. By dint of seeking to capture it and recapture it, it ends up always occupying a point at which its object is perpetually out of reach. That is why filmic analyses, once they begin to be precise, and while, for the reasons I have just suggested, they remain strangely incomplete, are always so long, according to the extent of their coverage, even if analysis is, as we know, always in a sense interminable. That is why they are so difficult, or more accurately so ungrateful to read, repetitive, complicated, I shall not say needlessly so, but necessarily so, as the price of their strange perversity. That is why they always seem a little fictional: playing on an absent object, never able, since their aim is to make it present, to adopt the instruments of fiction even though they have to borrow them. The analysis of film never stops filling up a film that never stops running out: it is the Danaids' cask *par excellence*. This is what makes the text of the film an unattainable text: but it is so surely only at this price.

Although it would already be to go much further, we might change our point of view completely and ask if the filmic text should really be approached in writing at all. I think a *contrario* of the wonderful impression I received on two occasions, to cite only these two, when confronted with two quotations in which film was taken as the medium of its own criticism. This was in two broadcasts in the series 'Cinéastes de notre temps', on Max Ophüls and Samuel Fuller. One saw, and then resaw while a voice off emphasised certain features, two of the most extraordinary camera movements in the history of the cinema, in which such movements are by no means uncommon. The first in the ball in *Le Plaisir*, just as the masked figure more and more unsteadily crosses the length of the ball room, then collapses in a box where, beneath the mask of a young man an old one is revealed; the second, in *Forty Guns*, follows the hero from the hotel he is leaving to the post office to which he goes to send a telegram, and saves for the end of a long dialogue his meeting in a single continuous field with the 'forty guns' who race past on horseback on the left side of the frame. Here there is no longer any divergence, no need of narration. A true quotation, in all its obviousness. But this sudden quotability which film allows to film (and in the same way sound to sound) obviously has its other side: will oral language ever be

able to say what written language says? And if not, at the price of 27  
what changes? Beneath the appearances of an answer *a contrario*,  
this is a serious question, economic, social, political, profoundly  
historical, since it touches on the formidable collusion of writing  
and Western history in which the written alternately or even simul-  
taneously performs a liberating and repressive function. Can or  
should the work, be it image or sound, in its efforts to accede to  
the text, ie to the social utopia of a language without separation,  
do without the text, free itself from the text?

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## Writing as Auto-Visualisation: Notes on a Scenario and Film of *Peter Pan*

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'In the classical cinema, the special effect is held to function best when it can be referred simultaneously, through a division of belief and a denial of perception, to the diegesis and to the enunciation ( . . . ) Thus there is no trucage without trickery' (Christian Metz, 'Trucage et cinema', in *Essais sur la signification au cinema II*, Paris 1972, p 176, p 183).

As a statement of cinematic prowess which is re-absorbed by the diegesis, the special effect admits and contests its status as fabrication. Thus trucage is a kind of caricature of the basic deception on which the impression of cinematic analogy depends. In the case of *Peter Pan*, where the pro-filmic event is already structured,<sup>1</sup> "analogy" explicitly relies on the recognition of a pre-fabricated object. Within this context, the cinema can be used to re-assert the existence of the global signifier – *Peter Pan* – and the objects which it contains or to which it refers by placing them on the same plane; the rectangular screen replaces theatrical space. The special effect insists on the mechanisms whereby the "classical" cinema

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1. When the *Scenario* is written in 1920, the textual history of *Peter Pan* includes six chapters of a novel for adults (J M Barrie, *The Little White Bird*, 1901), an illustrated short story for children (*Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, 1906), a novel for children (*Peter and Wendy*, 1911), a play performed annually in London since 1904, which will not be published until 1928 (*Peter Pan*, or *The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*, in *Collected Plays*, 1928), as well as several distinct versions, including eg an authorised school version, 1915, by a number of different authors. . . . A detailed discussion of the problems raised by the dissemination (and "mythologisation") of *Peter Pan* as children's classic would be out of place in this article. The *Scenario* comes in response to a demand for translation from theatre to screen.

30 *realises* its objects – Tinkerbell, for example, has a body, can actually been seen. The *Scenario for a Proposed Film of Peter Pan* (written by J M Barrie in 1920, published integrally in Roger Lancelyn Green, *Fifty Years of Peter Pan*, London 1954, pp 171-221) thus attempts to visualise itself as a pre-existent textual system which it assumes and creates. As the reflection and fictional extension of itself, it refigures, or mimics, the process whereby the visual image is seized in the primary instance of signification as defined by Lacan in 'The Mirror-Phase as formative of the function of the I' (*Ecrits*, Paris 1966, translated *New Left Review* n 51, September-October 1968); the partial and inverted image in the mirror is grasped as a totality and constitutes the subject as fiction. The distribution of *Peter Pan* as film will confer an identifiable visual image on a multiple and fractured pre-existent textual system.

The *Scenario* itself is rejected by the Paramount producers in 1924; it remains, literally, an attempt at filmic "writing". Half-way between the written texts of *Peter Pan* which precede it, and the film which it "projects", the *Scenario* is in a privileged position for the discussion of the pertinence of linguistic concepts for the analysis of film. In this case, the issue is confused as the *Scenario* is an attempt to construct images out of words whose pre-text is in itself predominantly verbal. Language here then controls the text in its materiality, but reference to language as substance, or even as the interior verbal resonances of the image, does not exhaust the properly linguistic properties of a non-verbal signifying system. In 'Communications linguistique et spéculaire' (*Cahiers pour l'analyse* n 3, Paris 1966, p 46), Luce Irigaray stressed: 'The Gestalt of the image, for the same reasons as the discrete character of the signifier, produces discontinuity. They have an identical function of "coupure"', addressing herself to attempts to retrieve the image from linguistic discontinuity, and pointing to the divisive activity of the visual sign as mark. This divisive function can be referred out of the contiguous space of the image to the internal relationship between visual sign and referent: the visual sign is an inverse or partial image of the object it attempts to constitute, and does not stand in direct or natural relation to its object. The *Mirror-Phase* shows this object/image dialectic to be pre-linguistic historically, but fully linguistic structurally.

If the cinema, especially the silent cinema, where linguistic mediation is "minimal", seems to refute this by apparently producing an analogical replica of its object or icon, in the case of *Peter Pan* it can be seen clearly as constituting a non-existent object (Peter Pan), whose recognition depends on the fact that it is "nommable" (Metz), that is, known from earlier texts. Here language intervenes as internal speech, taken as the recognition of a culturally established fact, and cancels the dislocation between image and object by ascribing to the former its status as social referent. Internal speech validates or socialises the visual image,

which is always the sign of an object which is not present, and, in the case of *Peter Pan*, has actually been lost (lost childhood). 31

This relationship between name and image is the model for the subject's insertion into language, taken here not only as a function of the paradigmatic relationship between sign and referent or sign and connotation, but as the structure of the signifying chain or syntagm itself. The separate axes are interdependent, since the substantiation of the absent or lost object is always the first instance of a repetition or insistence, the process whereby the subject is caught up in a signifying concatenation which both excludes and represents it. If linguistic insistence is always the sign of the lost unit which underpins its movement, this will be pertinent for the analysis of any narrative system, in the tension between that unit, which henceforth functions as cause and object of desire, and its representation. This tension can be referred to *Peter Pan* within his text, as the lost but constantly re-iterated object of desire (as eternal childhood, Peter Pan never grows up and therefore can only repeat himself as always the same), as well as to the insistence of the text itself (Peter Pan endlessly escaping from one text into the next). This evacuation or evasion of the text's prime signifier as the condition of its operation is therefore taken as the figurative or formal equivalent of the ex-centric relationship of the subject to its representations, and the place of desire within that relationship. One of the objectives of this article will be to differentiate within the *Scenario* and the film those structural properties which are articulate of this tension.

The article attempts therefore to continue inquiries recently initiated by *Screen* on the place of language in the study of film narrative, both as the form of content (language as inner speech) and as the form of expression (language as structure or system). These issues will be discussed firstly, in terms of the relationship between word and image in the *Scenario*; and secondly, in relation to the predominance of two cinematic techniques demanded by the *Scenario*: (a) the use of the subjective insert or vision which, contained by the "speaking" subject, duplicates the way in which the *Scenario* is contained by other texts or utterances, while also displacing the subject outside the present moment of the diegesis; (b) the use of trucage or special effects to realise (bring to life) or negate the filmic objects.

Finally, the rejection of the *Scenario* by the Paramount producers will be discussed in relation to the Herbert Brenon/Jesse Lasky *Peter Pan* of 1924 with special reference to the reorganisation of (a) and (b) above; some tentative suggestions will be made as to the logic which motivates that reorganisation, and a segment of the film will be described which could be said to disobey the structuring principle of the film as a whole, and thereby, in defiance of that logic, to re-instate Peter Pan in his position as lost object of desire.

The interdependence of word and image in the *Scenario* acts first as a corrective to the notion that cinematicity and verbal language are inversely proportionate; language seen here as substance, ideally redundant, or at least rigidly demarcated from the image itself. Continually crossed by different types of writing, the *Scenario* illustrates the varying functions of writing within an already verbal complex which sets as its first task the suppression of the written word: 'The aim has been to have as few words as possible' (all quotations from Barrie, in Lancelyn Green op cit). Extra-filmic reference, inter- and intra-iconic writing, that is writing between and within the individual images, reveal the complexity of these functions. The inter-title carries the weight of those moments which are by definition symbolic: naming and talking, but this does not exhaust its function, and its relation to the surrounding images is not constant. The inter-title reveals its double origins in the theatrical and pictorial arts; attempting to recreate theatrical space, it can be used to remedy the felt "non-communicative" aspect<sup>2</sup> of the cinematic medium by asking questions which the image or inter-title proceeds to answer itself. In this sense, the inter-title is used to initiate a dialogue between the various levels within the text. Where it is simply duplicated by the image that follows it, the inter-title acts as "scene-change" or transition from one image to the next, by simultaneously cutting the former and anticipating the latter. It is also the content form of its visual referent, the title of its image or picture, that is, a signified which poses as a signifier. When the relationship between inter-title and image is not redundant on the level of content, and the title carries information in excess of the image which is its visual referent, the distinction has a diegetic function: 'He foolishly ties Nana up in the yard, instead of leaving her in the nursery to guard his children'; here the title partially anticipates the effect of the action then visualised (the tying up of Nana) which it thus overtakes, the tension between them being used to sustain the hermeneutic.

The interpenetration of index and "enigma" carries over to the intra-iconic plane, where the written word determines recognition of objects, whose place within the present image it can also exceed. A 'close-up' shows the word *soap* on the object Peter Pan uses to fasten his shadow, and in another image, *poison* on the bottle

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2. This section of the article is attempting to illustrate the ways in which the image relies on direct verbal intervention; this is not to be confused with the idea that the image itself cannot contain rhetorical tropes (cf J-L Schefer, *Scénographie d'un tableau*, Paris 1969), or with the original statement by Metz that the cinema is a means of expression as opposed to a system of communication. The role of recognition as essential to the functioning of the visual image seems to place it firmly within the context of a communication system.

whose contents Hook pours into Peter's medicine; Hook lies in bed reading a copy of the *Eton Chronicle* 'of which a real copy must be used'. In the first two examples, the naming of the object is explanatory or descriptive; in the second, it also anticipates a potential crisis (Peter's death) and thus spills out of the containing image, acting as inter-iconic link by its position in the hermeneutic chain; in the third instance, the name is a cultural location. 33

The nominal function reinforces the process whereby an object is internally assigned its position within a specific verbal language. In the case of the proper name, it is the additional function of the inter-title to secure that recognition. All the main characters are introduced with an introductory nominal title which identifies: 'Wendy, John, Michael', and, if necessary, defines its object: 'the fairy Tinkerbell'.

Peter Pan does not have an introductory nominal title; he names himself, since his name first appears inside a title as a reply to a spoken query from Wendy. The text's own silence confirms his role as recognisable mediator between the past and present text(s). He does not have a title, but is the title: *Scenario for a Proposed Film of Peter Pan*, that is, the global signifier or text itself. Peter Pan is thus distinguished from the other "characters" within the *Scenario*. The repeated auto-reflexive activity whereby he is the text and is his name expresses his ambiguity as a purely textual fact which is both familiar and non-existent. The ambivalent relationship between name and identity rebounds into the space of that *Peter Pan* text which has set as its task the securing of its own image. Heavily invested in that image, the *Scenario* seems to lend itself to the articulation of this paradox, since it is name and image which act as the first signs of a subjectivity always at one remove from its referent, that is, discrete and inverse (the image in the mirror) or part of a symbolic system that precedes it (the name as social identity):

'This absence of the subject from its image, as from its name, no doubt explains their power of *de-realisation*. It is there in the place that is not that the subject is constituted as identical to itself' (Irigaray, op cit, p 46).

Thus Metz's point that to be "nommable" is the pre-condition for the recognition of the filmic object finds its confirmation in the broader function of the name as condition of the auto-recognition of the subject, the dependence of image and identity on a pre-existent symbolic system. This seizing of the image by sets of external signifiers is extended by the extra-filmic references of the *Scenario*: James Fenimore Cooper is referred to twice as an indication of how the Indians are to be portrayed. Written into the visual descriptions, these indications guarantee the status of the image within an assumed historical and literary heritage, of which other

34 texts of *Peter Pan* explicitly form a part. The *Scenario* contains the only reference to *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* within the whole cycle that starts with the 1904 production of the play. The shot to accompany the title: 'Peter was away from home that night attending a fairy wedding', is described: 'an idea of what this should be like can be got from my book *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*.' Peter Pan is displaced from the scene of the narration ('away from home') in a parenthesis which refers him back to his textual infancy. Thus the present text (and underground home) is momentarily emptied of its prime signifier as the extra-filmic reference closes the textual circuit.

The implication of absent texts in the *Scenario* is duplicated on the inter-iconic level in Barrie's conception of montage. Of the eight autonomous segments outlined in Metz's *grande syntagmatique du film narratif* ('large syntagmatic category of the narrative film'), the insert, intervening image in a single sequence, predominates in the *Scenario*. The location of the insert is problematic since the criterion for defining the surrounding sequence, that it should be contained in a single shot, cannot be verified. I am therefore reading as inserts those images which are 'presented once only and in the middle of a separate syntagm' (Metz: 'La grande syntagmatique du film narratif,' *Communications* n 8, 1966, p 123); the surrounding syntagm is spatially and temporally continuous; the insert is therefore a parenthesis.

Of the eighteen inserts in the *Scenario*, there is one metaphoric or non-diegetic insert, the image of baby bears to illustrate the title: 'In the house under the trees they lived very like baby bears'; the rest fall into the category of the subjective insert, an image of which the preceding "speaker" (or in one instance, his statement – the account of the origins of the fairies) is the subject (recollection, dream or fantasy). Thus Wendy's story to John and Michael, and later her story on the Island, Peter's description of his past, Hook's recollection of his first battle with Peter, Wendy's longing to return, etc, are all written into the narration at the point where the episode is recalled or desired: 'We have a vision of what the father is saying to the mother'; 'Then in a vision we see the incident happening . . . ' etc. The subjective insert is strictly a visualisation of the history or anticipated future of the subject of the surrounding image, usually either Peter or Wendy.

The temporal distinction, on which the insert depends, is repeated as a function of the difference between Wendy and Peter. Peter never has a vision of his anticipated future – as the boy who does not grow up, he has "no future" – even when recollection of the Never Never Land (eg a vision of the Lost Boys) is part of the future of the narrative.<sup>3</sup> Peter's visions are used to tell his story (the escape, the island). Conversely, when Wendy is on the island,

3. *Narrative* is used to refer to *narrative discourse*, at those points

her story (nursery life is told as a story in a vision) and her visions (the story turns into a vision of her return) re-assert her connection with the nursery and anticipate her future – technically the only future (growing-up), she is seen as a woman. The story she tells is the only point where the insert is a direct repetition of the narrative: 'We now have a series of visions (reproduced from the nursery scenes) . . .'. Thus the visions contained by the surrounding syntagm also serve the function of containing (protecting or normalising) their subject, Wendy.

At this point in the narrative, Peter's mediation between the alternative worlds of the diegesis is explicitly presented as a failure to re-enter or exclusion. His corresponding vision is a challenge and reply to Wendy's – 'Wendy, you are wrong . . .' – to which it provides a kind of paradigmatic alternative. Peter is seen returning home, finding the nursery barred and another baby in the bed. Further, the relation of his vision to the narrative is also an inversion of that of Wendy's, since the vision is not a repeat of earlier scenes, but the narrative is later to repeat the vision at the moment preceding the children's return: 'Here is repeated the vision of Peter arriving at his own nursery and finding it barred and another child sleeping in his bed'. The narrative picks up the vision in its future and immediately contests its status as real future by inverting it – Peter Pan bars the window and excludes Wendy (inverse repetition or wish fulfilment). The image is then reconverted, as Peter leaves and Wendy returns. The insert is thus distinguished from the rest of the narrative as an unfulfilled wish by double inversion, and emptied out of the text (Peter flies off).

The criterion for defining the subjective insert, that it should be 'designated as absent' (Metz: *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, Paris 1968 p 126; *Film Language*, New York and London 1974, p 125) is thus re-iterated at the level of content. The subjective insert displaces its subject, who, in the case of Peter, is also excluded from the vision and finally from the narrative. The vision and its content are re-connected as a statement of the absence on which the subjective insert structurally depends.

Both predominant structure (the insert) and prime signifier are held in ex-centric relation to the text they control, and thereby situate *Peter Pan*, in an endless overlapping of his formal and diegetic status, as an object whose substantiation is the mark of its absence. This process can be taken as comparable to the way in which the cinema appears to produce as real object a highly codified filmic artefact. In this sense, the cinema is itself a special effect (*effet du réel*), trucage or cheat. The special effect proper overlays this process. Exploiting the assumption that the images on which it works are the images of an objectifiable or real world,

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where it is not possible to make a rigid demarcation between narration and diegesis.

36 the special effect<sup>4</sup> can partially admit its status as falsifier of that world. A self-confessed deception, the special effect distracts attention from the deceptive substratum on which it depends, and with which, since it also operates as a narrative statement, it is simultaneously equated.

This process of substantiation is again written into the *Peter Pan* texts at the level of content, as objects are continually shifted in the direction of a materialisation indicated as suspect by the narrative. Mistaken for another object (the thimble or acorn), the kiss is a tangible object which can change hands and save lives; Peter Pan is first present in the nursery as a shadow whose severance from its subject makes it the central enigma of the opening sequence; in the pirate ship sequence of the *Scenario*, it is Peter's shadow that is seen on the floor when the pirates one by one enter the cabin; here Peter's absence (he must not be seen) and his presence are the conditions of his victory.

The special effect reinforces this process; it is primarily conceived in the *Scenario* as a means of vitalisation which raises the filmic object one level in the hierarchy of animation, while focussing on the aberrant nature of that vitality by drawing attention to the process of trucage; it takes as its main referents the flight and the island sequences, whose reality status is already differentiated within the diegesis. Tinkerbell and the fairies have bodies; the Statue of Liberty comes to life and 'mothers' the children in flight; flowers walk after Peter Pan; Wendy's hut breathes smoke the moment it is completed. The "growing-up" of the filmic objects also operates temporally by means of the speeding up of a succession of images. Wendy's hut is built 'with miraculous speed'; the moon goes from one quarter to another 'to indicate the passing of time'; the four seasons are pictured in rapid succession: 'the actual process should be seen'.

In Peter's introduction to Wendy, his explanation of his past is inter-cut by a vision in which he is seen to grow:

'The clothes, socks, etc, of him at one period should seem to drop off him and be replaced by others as he grows older, and we should actually see his legs growing longer and so on.'

In this instance, the process is immediately negated by the written text ('the real baby is much alarmed . . .'), by the following image of the baby's escape, and by the position of the image itself as a double insert within the narrative syntagm – Peter's vision of his parent's prediction of his future. The negation of Peter Pan's growth by the form of content and expression opposes this effect to the type of vitality seen on the island, which, although visibly *pro-*

4. Ie those effects which are either *visible* (eg talking dogs) or *invisible* (eg the invisible man), and not those which Metz defines as *imperceptible*, ie depending for their success on the fact that they go unnoticed (eg doubles or stuntmen).



cessed, functions as temporary equaliser between the world of the island and the world of the nursery by the persistent animation of the former. 37

This function is further sustained and parodied by the reduction or flattening of those filmic objects which belong to the real world – Wendy, John, Michael. So that they should fit into the island home, they are literally flattened with a rolling pin or shortened by pressure at both ends. Thus the technique whereby all the characters are given equal physical status as objects on the screen is imitated within the diegesis, the connection between technical and diegetic effect being metaphoric.

The reduction of Wendy, John and Michael is repeated in the final sequence by means of an effect which places its contents into a past tense. Wendy has a vision of the island in which she is included 'but the figures are only ghosts, done in the manner which is so effective in the films . . .'. As a kind of double negative (flattening, the ghost), the vision re-instates Wendy as "real" object (she is seen as a woman) and effectively cancels the island. In the penultimate image, this effect will be reversed and repeated as Wendy appears as a ghost on the island from which she withdraws, and whose materialisation is therefore now the sign of its loss. Thus the combination of those instances where the special effect reduces, rather than animates, its objects serves to re-distinguish between the real objects (the nursery) and those that do not exist (The Never Never Land).

In conclusion to this section of the article, an existential query is present at the different levels of the *Scenario* which can be referred to a number of inquiries relating to the place of object and organisation within film texts. In two instances, the written text directly expresses this query. When the inter-title asks the audience to save Tinkerbell's life, the screen area is disrupted: 'He, as it were, comes outside the scene . . .' by a direct communication with the audience which demands a reply; this reply must be a statement of belief in the filmic object (the fairy) as condition of the continuation of the narrative – 'Oh, say that you believe: Wave your handkerchiefs! Don't let Tink die' – and in the following image: 'he thanks audience'. In the second instance, the inter-title poses a question which it answers negatively as an uncertainty or open question: 'Who was Peter Pan? No one really knows. Perhaps he was just someone's boy who never was born'; in this second instance, the interiorisation of the query marks it with the impossibility of reply, and hence of the recovery of the object, which is demanded, and assumed, by the first.

## II

Two main points emerge from this discussion of the *Scenario*: that

38 the object of desire is always in excess of its representation, but since this lost unit is the pre-condition of signifying concatenation, it can be organised back into the film system through a specifically cinematic code (*la grande syntagmatique*), or be articulated through a filmic process which could be defined as meta-cinematic, since it takes as its plane of content the images of the film themselves:

' While the referents of the film images are objects, the referents of optical effects are in a sense the images themselves, or at least those that are contiguous to them in the chain ' (Metz: 'Trucage et cinéma' *Essais . . . II*, op cit, p 173).

The question that emerges now is what happens to these properties of the textual system when they become conditioned by a second set of constraints arising from a specific industry – the Hollywood film industry in 1924, Paramount, and the Brenon/Lasky contract within that industry. The inter-text of *Peter Pan* is now no longer determined predominantly by its content (past versions of the same diegesis), but by the substance and form of expression of the projected version, that is, *Peter Pan* as a film within a complex of past films of the Hollywood industry. It is the difference between *Peter Pan* as image envisaged and image materialised, the simultaneous reading off of the *Scenario* into past moments of *Peter Pan* as concrete production (the play) and a literal projection of its image, which will both fix that image and disperse it (the emphasis on exhibition and distribution).

The intention, therefore, is not to attempt an analysis of the Hollywood film industry of 1924, except in so far as it can be seen to impose a specific organisation on a pro-filmic event whose structure is already "cinematic" (the rejected *Scenario*), by operating a systematic reduction of special effect and syntagmatic organisation according to a theatrical prototype (the film as photo-play). The *Peter Pan* film is predominantly filmed in a long shot according to the proscenium stage model; with the exception of one shot (cf p 39), the camera is static throughout the film; the overall organisation of the narrative content is the same as that of the play, a single logico-temporal continuum with four main temporally consecutive and spatially homogeneous sequences: the nursery, the Never Never Land, the pirate ship, the nursery; the inter-titles are expanded from the ninety-six of the *Scenario* to two hundred and eighty-three whose main function is that of spoken dialogue, presented in quotation marks, and preceded and followed by a shot of the speaking subject visibly seen to mime the first and last words of the dialogue; there are no subjective inserts – all the visions are absorbed either into the inter-titles as spoken explanation or into the present moment of the diegesis; all the special effects which would have demanded animation, diminution or spirit photography are eliminated.

The special effects retained from the *Scenario* are the picturing

of Tinkerbell and the fairies (in-the-camera-matte photography)<sup>5</sup> 39  
and the rapid building of the island hut (reverse-motion shot, a technique also used for the exit of the boys from the underground home). These are not the only special effects of the film, but they are the significant response to two moments of the *Scenario* which bind its logic, since:

- the audience is to be appealed to in order to save Tinkerbell's life, in which case it adds to the effect if she is *seen* to have one (the special effect reinforces the *claims* of the filmic object);
- the construction of Wendy's hut and the departure of the boys from the underground home are seen as temporal aberrations, the rhyming of the two reverse-motion shots acting as a kind of mutual cancellation which is re-marked by the framing of the central sequences by the nursery (the beginning and end of the story, the point of departure and return, normal domestic time against temporal mutation).

The only other two effects of the film are the shot of the flight over the city, and the return shot of the flying boat over the Lagoon and then over the city; this shot is again the echo of the first, with the distinction within the image that in the departure the children are separate and hence can potentially be dispersed (shot down), while in the return they are contained by the boat, that is they are returned integrally (lost children and Lost Boys). Note that the only camera movement in the film will be the panning shot of the Lost Boys as the objects of Mrs Darling's vision, who in one glance inventories them, ie takes them in (adoption).

Here Metz's remarks on the ambivalent function of the special effect need to be looked at again, since the special effects excluded from the film seem to have their equivalents in early cinematic history (eg spirit photography for the final island sequence, stop-substitution for the growth of Peter Pan), and these include an effect whose signified is the vision itself: the collapsed wall sequence with deep set insert for Cinderella's vision of the prince in Méliès' 1912 *Cinderella*, although this may have raised problems of focus in 1924; cf also *The Little Milliner's Dream*, Gaumont, 1912.<sup>6</sup> It would seem therefore that the rejection of the special effect belongs to a concept of narrative in which the occulting of

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5. This is extended by a double technique, as Tinkerbell is pictured as a ball of light during her first appearance in the nursery and in all those sequences where she is seen to move across the space of the image; although there are no doubt technical reasons for this spatial restriction, the technique would seem to be at least partially determined by convention, since the appearance of Tinkerbell as a ball of light echoes the play's use of a spot-light.

6. It has been pointed out to me that the close shots of Peter Pan beside the in-the-camera-matte inserts of Tinkerbell's boudoir could also serve as signifier of the vision. The exclusion of the subjective insert from the film should be referred to the later points on consecutive narrative logic.

40 the camera (the screen as stage) has as its corollary the reduction of those effects whose focus on the cinematic operation would be an obstacle to the diegetic flow. The special effect, as Metz points out, best functions when it can be simultaneously referred to diegesis and narration, but it belongs predominantly to the latter: 'to the récit and not to the story, to the instance that recounts and not to that which is recounted' (Metz: *Essais . . . II*, op cit, p 179). Without positing an easy equivalence between the development of narrative representation in the cinema and the relative suppression of the special effect (starting eg with the decline of Méliès) which would involve an analysis of the relationship between technique and ideology beyond the scope of this paper,<sup>7</sup> it does seem that in the case of *Peter Pan* the coincidence of the diegetic continuum with a predominantly theatrical codification leads to the elimination of those special effects specifically pointed to in the *Scenario* as "jubilatory" of the cinematic medium as such.

The eviction of Peter Pan as prime signifier from his film text does not therefore take place through a meta-cinematic process, nor through that element of the syntagmatic code which precisely designates presence as absence (the insert), but through a narrative continuum (growth) whose consecutive temporal logic in itself constitutes a negation of Peter Pan's semantic content (the boy who would not grow up). Peter Pan's position in the text as the absent condition of its operation is re-ordered by the film as a temporal normalisation. It therefore seems relevant to indicate those points where the threat posed by Peter Pan to that normalisation within the narrative can also be seen to threaten the predominantly theatrical cohesion of the text.

The film divides into four main sequences: the nursery, the Never Never Land, the Jolly Roger, the nursery. Of these the two nursery and pirate-ship sequences conform to Metz's definition of the scene, in that they consist of a series of images offered as spatio-temporally continuous. The island sequence breaks up into a number of episodes varying from scene to autonomous shot; the final episode offers the most serious problems of definition since it could be described as a scene, in that the two places of its action are in fact one and the same (above and below ground), or as an ordinary sequence with partial alternation; further differentiations can be made within the episode on the basis of the relationship between title and image, and these units will be referred to as segments.

The two central sequences are framed within the narrative by the surrounding nursery scenes, with a supplementary concluding shot of Peter Pan playing his pipes in front of the island hut with

7. Cf for the problems raised by this type of analysis J L Comolli: 'Technique et idéologie, caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ,' *Cahiers du Cinéma* nn 230, 231, 233, 235 and 241, 1971-3, partly translated by the Educational Advisory Service of the BFI.

the super-imposed title: 'And so it will go on as long as children are gay and innocent and heartless'. The final image is thus marked as a surplus, left over from the narrative sequence which precedes it, anonymous (the voice of the title is not located) and self-perpetuating, as the precise content of the word 'children' is left open – a reference back to the nursery children and forward, hypothetically, to future children, but bound to the image itself (Peter Pan as child). 41

The movement in and out of the four main sequences is marked by a fade, establishment title and shot, with two further distinctions within the island sequence (the forest above ground and the underground home), while the two major transitions (the departure and the return) are each marked by a narrative crisis which is the condition of their possibility. Mr Darling substitutes his medicine for Nana's milk, evicts her from the nursery and facilitates Peter's entry and the flight of the children. Hook substitutes poison for Peter's medicine, which is taken by Tinkerbell, Peter is saved and able to deliver the children from the pirates. In each case, the displacement of the 'poison' on to an object other than its designate frees Peter and creates the passage of his entry. In each case, Peter's intrusion (into the nursery, on to the pirate ship) is preceded by a violation which upsets the structure of the text either as an immediate consequence or simultaneously with its action. Thus the poisoning of Nana upsets the spatial homogeneity of the nursery scene (the shot of Nana being tied up in the yard) and anticipates its internal disruption; it then leads on, from Peter's introduction in the nursery, to the alternating syntagm of the chase from the dinner party back to the house, inter-cut by shots of the flying children seen through the dinner party and nursery windows. This alternation breaks up the temporal and spatial continuity of the preceding scene, as well as designating the children as the objects of adult vision at two removes, that is, escaped (or lost). Significantly, the only shot in the film in which all the characters are seen in back view is the shot of the guests rising from the table to the window up left, that is, something is going on which cancels their centrality since it is off-screen or off-stage.

In the second instance, the violation itself upsets the structure of the narration by disturbing the relationship between dialogue and image. The poisoning of Peter Pan by Hook takes place during the longest segment of the film without inter-titles, three minutes and fifty-three seconds punctuated by inter-titles at either end: 'Your son, Wendy' at the beginning, 'Who's there, I say . . . ?' at the end. The segment thus starts with the reply to the sexual query 'Peter, what are you to me?' / 'You are my what?' – the neutrality of the reply having as its direct consequence the suppression of speech – and concludes with a demand 'Who's there, I say? I won't open the door until you speak'. This demand, which breaks the silence of the preceding segment, leads into that



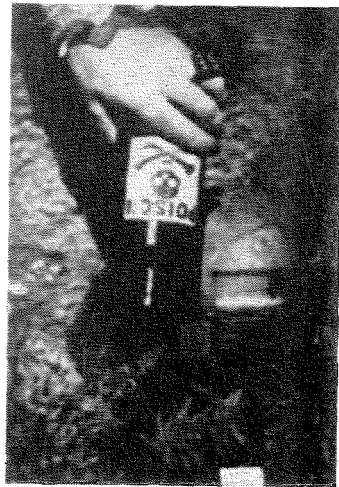
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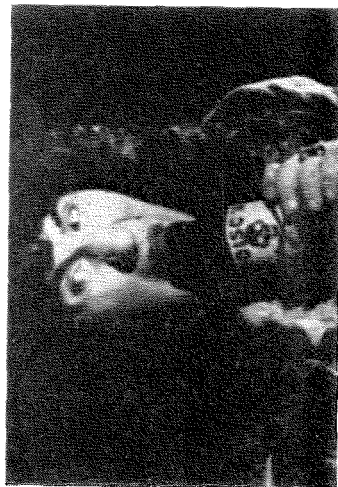
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segment of the film which in contradistinction to the one that precedes it, is most verbally dense, since its three minutes and eight seconds (up to the fade-out on the island sequence) are inter-cut by twenty-three titles. This verbal density starts with a one-sided dialogue between Peter and Tinkerbell (Peter translates back the information Tinkerbell conveys: 'What! The Redskins defeated?'), and moves into a one-sided dialogue between Peter and the audience, the appeal to save Tinkerbell's life: 'Oh, say quick that you believe!' Thus the saving of the children is dependent on the words of Tinkerbell (who never talks) and the saving of Tinkerbell on the words of the audience (who are outside the text); the verbal density of the segment is the sign of the impossibility of a dialogue which is in each case pre-supposed by the hermeneutic. It thereby reinstates (or overstates) Peter Pan as active and speaking subject as against the previous segment in which he is reclining, asleep and silent. Thus this segment is a type of verbal revenge on the suppression of Peter Pan in the previous segment which is the only point in the film in which Peter is the passive object of adult vision of a character within the text (Hook), and also out of reach, the tension between his visualisation and inaccessibility providing the dynamic of the final seventeen shots of the thirty-two shots which make up the segment.

To facilitate reference I will call these seventeen shots a scene, since they comprise that part of the segment (punctuated by the two inter-titles) which is spatio-temporally continuous (the underground home). As a definition, however, this immediately raises problems, which point to the way in which the whole of this episode defies a rigid codification. The whole episode starts with the establishing title: 'The underground home of the Lost Boys in the Never Never Land', defining a spatial continuity which will continually be disrupted: within the diegesis, as Wendy and the boys decide to leave, and in terms of both diegesis and narration, as the pirate attack is situated outside the home, above ground. Further, the first fifteen shots of the segment, which could be described in terms of the diegesis as the kidnapping of Wendy and the boys, continually overlap with the scene that follows, since they start with three shots of the underground home, and the remaining twelve shots include a further two shots of the home, the full shot of Peter closing the upper hatch of the door, turning away across the image down left, and the full shot of Peter sitting on the bed of leaves and lying back. These two shots inter-cut the action above ground without inscribing a regular alternation, yet set up a spatial opposition re-marked by the content of the surrounding images. The first shot of Peter is preceded by a full shot of the pirate line throwing the boys into the hut<sup>8</sup> and is followed

8. The Wendy hut is above ground on the left opposite the entrance to the Home underground.

46 by a full shot of the pirates by the tree seizing Wendy with the intervention of Hook. The second shot of Peter is preceded by a full shot of Hook and Wendy standing beside the hut, and is followed by the long shot of the pirates rushing across the image from right to left towards the hut, with Hook as narrator and instigator in the foreground of the image. The intermediate shot is the long shot of Wendy and Hook's rear view march diagonally up left along the line of pirates from tree to hut.

Thus the shot of Peter Pan alone moving down left of the image is contained by the images of the boys taken above, and the abduction of Wendy, who then moves from the same point as Peter in his image from the right up left with Hook, thereby inscribing an opposite movement to Peter's; and the shot of Peter alone lying back on the bed in the space of his image, in a body movement which inscribes a diagonal up left of that image, is contained by the images of Wendy's entry into her hut and Hook's departure down right, and the crowding of the pirates around the hut to be seized and carried off at Hook's instigation. Thus Hook and Wendy's courtship, contract (she takes his arm) (Still 1), wedding march (Still 2), the entry into the hut and Hook's exit back off the image towards the tree (non-consummation) (Still 3) are framed by two shots of Peter moving across to the bed and lying back on the bed (Still 4), hence of Peter as alternative object of desire exactly as the wedding of Hook and Wendy is broken, as he assigns her instead to the pirates who carry her off, also to leave the image space vacant for Hook; the opposition is re-stated, as Wendy is only seen outside the hut, whose interior is never shown, while Peter is seen inside the home.

Further, the first two shots of the underground home following this episode (Still 6: the shot of the flickering lights as an indication of danger rhymes with the long shot of the extinction of the nursery lights, the putting out of the 'mother's eyes', in the first sequence of the film) are inter-cut by another transitional shot above ground (Still 5). Hook throws off his cloak and enters backwards down the tree trunk, that is, he derobes and descends into the home, which is not the hut to which he has led Wendy. This "preparative" shot refers back simultaneously to the episode above ground and to the scene which could be said to start with the previous shot of the home underground. It is an opposition which extends into the whole of the scene itself, since it is structured as a series of attempted intrusions, the sighting of the object, the attempt to draw the bolt, the pouring of the poison, etc. Hook is in fact only defined in this scene by the fact that he is not *in* the underground home (where Peter is lying) nor *out* of it (above ground). Thus the opposition which provides the dynamic of the scene is that which threatens its spatial continuity. The concluding title will not only re-introduce speech and mark a change of character (Tinkerbell for Hook) but will also bring about a spatial



re-alignment, since the whole of the following segment takes place indoors (Peter opens the hatch and lets Tinkerbelle in). 47

The scene consists of seventeen shots, eleven at close-range varying from medium-close shot to close up, framed by the two long shots of the underground home inter-cut by the near-medium shot of Hook at the beginning of the scene, and a full shot of the underground home and a near-medium shot of Peter at the end. The series of close-range shots which start with the opening of the hatch will be broken once only by a full shot of Peter lying on the leaves seen in profile and designated by the camera angle as the object of Hook's vision. This series can be read from the Stills 7-18 chronologically.

In each of the shots in which he is seen, Hook is filmed in close range from the waist or shoulders up; in all but one shot (Still 16), the cutting off of the image is re-marked by a cutting within the image, the upper line of the door through which Hook cannot pass. The close filming of Hook contrasts with the medium and full shots above ground in which the distance of the camera created a stage space for movement; the closing-in of the camera on Hook thus breaks that space and his body simultaneously, since he cannot move, or get in. The dynamic of the scene is provided by a number of incisions which cut across Hook's body and displace mobility to its fragments; firstly, to his eyes, the shifting from theatrical movement to cinematic mobility (the look), and secondly, to his hand and his hook, the latter in itself both the sign of an incision (the cutting off of his hand) and of the object of his look, Peter (since it was Peter who cut it off). The hook is in itself the first and last sign of Hook within the image, as the final shot of Hook's departure is the reverse duplicate of the first – the hook first appearing and then disappearing behind the door;<sup>9</sup> the dynamic of the scene is therefore reiterated through a verbal-visual pun on Hook as name and as object, the name acting as reference to that part of his body which is missing, and hence as the sign of the absence, or impotence, of that which it designates.

Peter is only seen once, the shot of the whole of his body, yet the centre of that body blends into the leaves on which he lies and his arms into the shadows of the leaves, so that it is Peter's legs which act as the sign of his totality, that is, that part of the body which is further excluded, or covered, in the images of Hook. The scene operates a series of metonymic disjunctions on Hook's body which are represented by a series of shots of hand and hook abortively penetrating the image from above, but whose absent condition is the body of the reclining Peter. Note the brevity of the shots which designate the objects of Hook's vision, and the momentary retreat of the camera from close shot to medium-close

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9. For reasons of space it has not been possible to reproduce a second still for shot 30; cf Summary/Description p 52.

48 shot following the fleeting image of Peter's body and the first abortive attempt at retrieval (Hook fails to draw the bolt). In each case, the impotence of hand and hook is balanced by a shot of Hook's face, an opposition repeated throughout the scene as his look gradually stabilises in a direction off left of the image; thus in direct relation to the impossibility of laying hands on Peter, Hook cannot take his eyes off him.

Between the two extremes lies Peter's medicine bottle and glass, the partial representatives of Peter, and of Wendy who left him the medicine; so that the abduction and rejection of Wendy re-appears here as a violation of her role (the extinction of the 'mother's eyes'), and a literal replacement of her position within the narrative, since it is Wendy who pours Mr Darling his medicine and instigates the crisis with Nana. Hook therefore undoes her maternal work (remember that the whole segment starts with Peter rejecting her sexual inquiry and defining himself as her son), and throws the safety of Peter's reply into question: the medicine glass will provide Hook's means of entry into the underground home and into the body of Peter. The shot of Hook's hand pouring the poison into Peter's empty glass is therefore a double metonymy which represents the paradox of a violation which is still out of touch with its object; the poison itself first appears in a shot in which Hook designates the bottle with his hook, already marking the means of access to the object of desire with the sign of its impossibility.

Following its momentary retreat on the sighting of Peter and the first failure at entry, the camera starts to "move" progressively in on Hook in stages, reaching the height of its proximity in the shot of the opening of the bottle, framing his face in an oral anticipation which removes the line of the door hitherto visible as a barrier within the image, and fore-plays the pouring of the liquid. The camera thus operates a kind of formal mimicry of Hook's penetration, and his withdrawal – the camera moves back for the final shot of Hook's departure behind the door, re-marking his climax with the barrier which was its primary instigation. It is only on Hook's departure and the closing of the hatch, that the image is retrieved as full, simultaneously with the recovery, or awakening, of its object, Peter, who is therefore only re-instated within the film at this moment of narrative closure.

If this article started by describing the binding of a "visual" construct by words and language in their materiality, it has been led to address itself to the way in which the relationship of the filmic object to its designate is one of construction, whose very activity is the sign of the increasing distance from the object it originally pre-supposed and on which it continues to depend; and how this

process can be seen as the formal equivalent of the relationship 49  
of an insistent desire to its object or cause. Discussions on internal  
speech, on verbal-visual metaphor in film systems are being  
extended to discussion of the ways in which the relationship of the  
linguistic signifier both to its referent and to the chain which  
supports it can be seen to have their equivalents in alternative  
modes of narrative expression, and how these in turn are re-worked  
by the conventions arising from the different material instances  
of their production. The disruption of single textual systems by the  
"tenant-lieu" of desire demonstrates the limits of a rigid notion of  
codification, whose inadequacy can still be referred to the primary  
relationship of disjunction between subject and language.

*Due to the unavailability of the Brenon Peter Pan in this country,  
it has been thought helpful to give a breakdown of the segment  
discussed.*

*The following chart obviously draws mainly on the tables of  
Raymond Bellour: 'The Obvious and the Code', Screen v 15 n 4,  
Winter 1974/5 (translated from Cinéma: Théories, Lectures, Revue  
d'Esthétique, Paris 1973), and Stephen Heath: 'Film and System:  
Terms of Analysis Part 1,' Screen v 16 n 1, Spring 1975.*

*A number of points, however, need to be made regarding the  
obvious adaptation of their schemas:*

*since the breakdown deals with a segment of a silent film dis-  
tinguished by its lack of inter-titles, there is no mention of dialogue;*










*since, with the exception of a single shot which does not belong  
to this segment, the camera is static throughout the film, there is  
no column to indicate the fixed or moving position of the camera;*

*correspondingly, there is increased emphasis on the column  
which refers to movement within the image – where movement is  
restricted to parts of the body, the subject of that movement is  
printed in italics.*

*All the shots are separated by cuts.*

*The term 'exit' has been used in the Summary/Description  
to indicate a movement in a direction off the image; it should be  
noted however that no character ever exits across the edge of  
the frame.*

*The table is meant to serve simply as reference, with the stills,  
for the analysis on pp 41-8.*

Time	Scale	Angle	Narration	Character Look/Angle	Character Movement	Summary/Description
00.00						<b>'Your Son, Wendy'</b>
1.	-	↑	N		W →	Close shot of Peter and Wendy in profile; Wendy throws off Peter's arm, turns off right.
2.	+	↑	N/P		→ B	Long shot of underground home; Boys (Lost Boys + John and Michael) exit from left to right; Peter, back to camera in foreground of image, has his right arm raised in direction of exit.
3.	-	↑	N/W		→ B	Long shot (reverse motion) of Boys exiting up root shafts from underground home; Wendy, back to camera in foreground of image, has left arm rising and falling.
4.	+	↑	N		→ B	Full shot of pirates grouped round tree hollow on right in line leading off left of image; three boys emerge in succession; first pirate places hand over their mouths and passes each boy along pirate line off left; Hook behind pirates on right, watches and rubs hands.
5.	-	↑	N		→ B	Long shot of pirate line leading from tree hollow on right diagonally to Wendy's hut up left; Boys thrown along line into hut.
6.	-	↑	N		H →	Medium close shot of Hook, tongue out, rubbing hands; turns down right and looks off.
7.	-	↑	N		→ B	Full shot of pirates in line beside Wendy's hut, receiving boys and throwing them into hut.
8.	+	↑	N		P →	Full shot of Peter closing latch (upper part of door) of underground home, turns away and moves down left.
9.	++ (Still 1)	↑	N		→ HW	As 4; Wendy emerges from hollow; first pirate places hand over her mouth; Hook comes forward with right arm raised, takes off hat, bows, offers arm to Wendy; Wendy takes arm, they exit left.

10.	+	LS	↑	N	HW	As 5; rear view of Hook and Wendy walking up left towards hut along line of pirates.
11.	+	FS	↑	N	W' HW H	As 7; Hook and Wendy at hut, Hook bows, Wendy curseys and enters hut, Hook exits across image down right.
12.	-	FS	↑	N	P	Full shot of Peter sitting on bed of leaves, raises left arm and lies back.
13.	+	LS	↑	N/H	Pirates	As 5, 10; Hook in foreground with back to camera, arms raised; pirates rush left to right towards hut.
14.	+	FS	↑	N	Pirates	Full shot of pirates picking up hut, move up right.
15.	+	LS	↑	N	Pirates H	As 5, 10, 13; Hook moves up centre back to camera towards pirates who exit up right with hut; Hook then rushes from centre to tree on right.
16.	+	LS	↑	N	H	Long shot of underground home; Peter discernible on leaves off-centre at back; lights go out.
17.	-	NMS	↑	N	H	Near medium shot of Hook by tree, throws off cloak, exits backwards down tree.
18.	-	IS	↑	N		As 16; night-lights flicker.
19.	+	CS	↑	N	H	Close shot of hatch opening, hook appears on left, hatch opens, Hook's face appears, looks around field of vision.
20.	-	FS	↘	H	H	Full shot of Peter lying in profile on leaves, camera angle from right of image, in position of Hook.
21.	+	MCS	↑	N	H	Medium close shot of Hook, eyes alight off left, puts hand down in front of hatch off.
22.	-	CU	↑	N	H (hand)	Close up of latch bolt, Hook's hand comes down from top of screen, stops above bolt.

Time	Scale	Angle	Narration	Character Look/Angle	Character Movement	Summary/Description
23. + (Still 11)	MCS	↑	N	H ↘	II ↓	As 21; Hook looks around field of vision, raises hook, places hook down off screen, eyes off left.
24. - (Still 12)	CU	↑	N		II ↓ (hook)	As 22; Hook comes down from top of screen, moves across bolt without gripping it.
25. + (Still 13)	CS	↑	N	H ↘		As 19; close shot of Hook looking down off screen, shakes door, looks off left.
26. - (Still 14)	CU	↘	H			Close up of 'PETER'S MEDICINE', glass and plant bowl, camera angle from right.
27. + (Still 15)	CU	↑	N	H ↘	II →	As 19, 23; Hook looking off left turns towards right, lifts bottle, 'POISON', skull and cross-bones on label, into image.
28. + + (Still 16)	CU	↑	N	II ↘	II	Close up of Hook, looking off left, nods, holds hook up against 'POISON' bottle, nods, 'laughs', takes cork out with teeth.
29. - (Still 17)	CU	↑	N		II (hand/poison)	Close up of 'POISON' poured from bottle into glass beside bowl, and 'PETER'S MEDICINE'.
30. + (Still 18)	CU	↑	N	H ↘	II ↘	As 19, 25, 27; Hook looking off left, mouth open, withdraws 'POISON' bottle into image, replaces cork with teeth, rolls tongue, 'laughs', waves hook in air, retreats behind hatch, hook disappears behind hatch which closes.
31. + +	IS	↑	N		I →	Full shot of underground home, Peter down left on leaves, gets up, walks across to right off.
32. -	NMS	↑	N			Near medium shot of Peter at hatch.

03.53 'Who's there, I say? I won't open the door until you speak.'

### Credits

*Peter Pan*, production company: Famous Players-Lasky, distributors: Paramount Pictures, released December 29, 1924, presented by Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky, director: Herbert Brenon, adaptation and screenplay: Willis Goldbeck, photography: James Wong Howe, special effects: Roy Pomeroy, settings: Edward Smith, cast: Betty Bronson (*Peter Pan*), Ernest Torrence (*Captain Hook*), Cyril Chadwick (*Mr Darling*), Virginia Brown Faire (*Tinkerbell*), Anna May Wong (*Tiger Lily*), Esther Ralston (*Mrs Darling*), George Ali (*Nana, the dog*), May Brian (*Wendy*), Philip De Lacey (*Michael*), Jack Murphy (*John*), black-and-white, silent, ten reels, 9,593 feet.

This credit list (taken from the *American Film Institute Catalogue*, New York and London 1971) differs in a number of respects from the opening credit sequence of the film:

'Adolph Zukor and Jesse Lasky/present/J M Barrie's/*Peter Pan*/a/Herbert/Brenon/Production/Copyright MCMXXIV/Famous Players Lasky Corporation/A Paramount Picture.'

Note that the relationship between Barrie and the text is one of unqualified possession; Roy Pomeroy is here not credited with special effects (for which the first credit does not appear until Raoul Walsh's *What Price Glory?* in 1926), but as assistant to the director.

Thanks are due to James Card of Eastman House and Kevin Brownlow for making available the print of *Peter Pan* and to Erich Sargent of the Educational Advisory Service of the British Film Institute for his material assistance. The quality of the reproduced stills leaves much to be desired; unfortunately, through no fault of James Card's or Kevin Brownlow's, still less of James Wong Howe's, the only print available from which to make them was a defective one.

## SCREEN EDUCATION

**Screen Education** is the companion journal to **Screen**, initiated four years ago in order to concentrate on the general area of relating film theory, educational theory and the actual practice of teaching film and television. **Screen Education** is concerned with the problems of defining educational 'knowledge', the creation of an area of study and recent developments in teaching strategies and curriculum reform.

### Special issue: The Searchers

The next issue of **Screen Education** (No 17) will offer, through reference to **The Searchers**, a range of approaches to the teaching of a film. Each critical concept adopted will be explicated, what the editorial board consider to be the important areas of discussion will be presented and the essential problematic involved in each method proposed will be raised. Further details obtainable from

SEFT, 29 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PL

## Formal Permutations of the Point-of-View Shot

Edward Branigan

An analysis of three films made in Hollywood in the 1930's showed that nearly 40 per cent<sup>1</sup> of the cuts create what Noël Burch in *Theory of Film Practice* (London and New York 1975) calls proximate spatial articulations (p 9); that is, the space revealed by shot A is near that of shot B – perhaps within the same room – but at no point does it overlap or coincide with the space of shot B. A number of techniques have been developed to link these proximate spaces into spatial, and often temporal, continuity (see eg Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar: *The Technique of Film Editing*, 2nd ed 1968, pp 211-72). One such technique is the eyeline match; and a subset of the eyeline match is the point-of-view shot (POV).

In order to understand what proportion of proximate articulations are POV shots, it will be necessary to define the formal elements of the POV shot. It will then be possible to discover what types of POV shots are favoured by the traditional Hollywood film. In addition – since the POV shot is often considered a 'subjective' shot<sup>2</sup> – a more rigorous definition of the shot will aid in the discrimination of a larger – and constantly shifting – narrative point of view or filmic voice. To identify filmic voice is to discover the

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1. This figure results from a shot-by-shot tabulation of all the transitions (cuts, dissolves, fades, wipes, etc) of *Ever In My Heart* (Mayo, 1933) (37 per cent), *Four Daughters* (Curtiz, 1938) (38.5 per cent), and *His Girl Friday* (Hawks, 1939) (40.6 per cent which includes 6.6 per cent cross-cutting via the telephone). A cut was not deemed a proximate articulation if the same character, though against different backgrounds, was common to both shots.
  2. The POV shot is one of five subjective shots listed by Christian Metz, 'Current Problems of Film Theory: C Metz on J Mitry's *L'Esthétique et Psychologie du Cinéma*, Vol II', *Screen*, v 14 n 1/2, Spring 1973, pp 45-49. The other categories are, broadly speaking, purely mental images, subjectivising the objective, imaginary narrative, and memory images.



origin of the narrative at any given moment – to discover who is speaking and from what standpoint.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, then, we will undertake to isolate the elements, and hence parameters, of the POV shot. 55

## I The Elements of POV

The POV shot is a shot in which the camera assumes the position of a subject in order to show us what the subject sees. More precisely, the POV shot is composed of five elements usually distributed in two shots as follows:

### Shot A: Point/Glance

1. *Point*: establishment of a point in space.
2. *Glance*: establishment of an off-camera object by glance from the point.

### Between Shots A and B:

3. *Transition*: temporal continuity.

### Shot B: Point/Object

4. *From Point*: the camera locates at the point, or very close to the point, in space defined by element one above.
5. *Object*: the object of element two above is revealed.

At first glance, the five elements of the POV shot appear trivial. However, let us examine them closer to see how a change in any one operates to subvert or de-stabilise the POV shot as a five element structure.

Element one ('point') is the establishment of a point in space. Its importance may be illustrated by the cases in which no point is established or more than one point is established. An example of the former would be the case where a glance is established by dialogue ('Hey, look at this!') but no point is established because the screen is black or the camera too far away (on the top of a building, say) or the character is off-screen, etc. An example of the establishment of too many points would be a shot of two heads turning in opposite directions.

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3. According to Roland Barthes, 'the real problem is not how to probe the narrator's motives or measure the effects the narration may have on the reader, but rather to describe the code through which the narrator's and the reader's presence can be detected within the narrative self' ('An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', *New Literary History*, v VI n 2, Winter 1975, p 260). See also, Barthes: *S/Z*, London and New York 1974, secs XXI, LIX, LX, LXVIII, and especially XII 'The Weaving of Voices', XX 'The Dissolve of Voices', and LXIV 'The Voice of the Reader.'

56 Element two ('glance') is the establishment of an off-camera object by glance. Whether or not a glance has occurred may be a matter of degree. Cues which may be present include the following: eye movement, head movement, body movement (eg walking to a door to answer a knock prior to a shot of the door swinging open in front of the camera), a new – perhaps sudden – camera angle or camera distance, camera movement (eg dolly-in), zoom, dialogue ('Hey, look at this!'), off-camera sound, music (a common device of horror films), the length of a shot (a character becomes fixated by an object), and perhaps even larger narrative structures, for instance, has everyone who has entered the room confronted the object?

In *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) we see Sam from the chest down as he says to Marion, lying on a bed, 'You never did eat your lunch, did you?' We then see a lunch tray on a table. We cannot ascribe this view to Sam because we were unable to see whether he was looking at Marion or the lunch tray. The shot of the tray is an ambiguous, unclaimed voice in the film.

It is important to note that the concept of 'glance' implies the existence of a sentient observer in whose viewpoint we may participate. This does not mean, however, that the POV shot is limited to humans nor even to living things. One low-budget horror film, utilising a special camera lens, offers the POV of a killer snake as it winds toward a sleeping victim. In *Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932) there is an extended sequence from the POV of a dead man. Here, the glance is established by emphasising the wide, staring eyes of the dead man. In *Blood and Roses* (Vadim, 1960) we share the viewpoint of an invisible spirit with the aid of a narrator and stirring window curtains.

The omission of elements one and two (point/glance) within a larger structure may create a tension of ambiguity. In Ozu Yasujiro's *Floating Weeds* (1959) and *Tokyo Story* (1953) there occur POV shots where a man looks at a flower in *Floating Weeds* and tombstones in *Tokyo Story*. However, later in the respective scenes, the POV structure is undermined, or evolves, when the point/object shot is repeated – the flower, the tombstones without the point/glance shot – a man in each case. Thus the flower and the tombstones now seem almost to exist independently, in their own right. We then realise that our first view may not, in fact have been a POV shot; that the men may not have been looking at the objects (only thinking of them, or if looking, not seeing; or whatever); that initially we were snared in the structure of the POV shot and the larger narrative structure (a reference to flowers in the dialogue; the sadness of death) in order to be set free at a later time. The filmic voice at this later time has also evolved: it no longer has a specific origin (the men); rather, it has become larger, more general, more plural.

Element three ('transition') is any device which implies tem-

poral continuity. There is no requirement of temporal continuity 57  
*within* shots A (point/glance) and B (point/object); all that is required is that the last fragment of shot A (elements one and two) be temporally joined to the first fragment of shot B (elements four and five). Without temporal continuity (or at least simultaneity), the resultant structure will be deviant. For example, in a party scene, we cut to a close-up (point/glance) then cut to what that person sees (point/object), but the second shot reveals a later time when the party is over – empty room, dirty glasses, etc. The structure is deviant. This is, in fact, the form of the traditional subjective flashback or flashforward. However, we will leave the question open whether or not all such memory sequences derive from the POV structure.

In element four ('from point') the camera moves to that point, or nearly so, established by element one of the POV structure. This implies the spatial continuity of shots A and B. When the camera does not move to the point previously established, a deviant structure is generated, such as the cut to a new scene. In *Early Summer* (Ozu, 1951) we track down a hallway in front of two women who are creeping forward to catch a glimpse of the man one of them was supposed to marry in an arranged marriage. The tracking movement continues as we cut to the viewpoint of the women. We soon realise, however, that we are in a different hallway, that we are approaching an empty room. Here, Ozu utilises an important secondary cue of spatial position – the so-called subjective travelling shot; that is, if a person is moving while looking at an object, then the point/object shot may also move. Ozu, however, uses the moving camera in this instance not in an effort to create a 'smooth' film style, but a style that actually stresses the structures on which it is based.<sup>4</sup>

More frequently, the secondary cues exist to reinforce spatial orientation. In *The General* (Keaton, 1926) we see Buster Keaton under a table lean toward a hole in the tablecloth, and then we see a long shot of the room framed by a ragged oval – which, of course, is the hole in the tablecloth and confirms that we are indeed located at a point previously seen. In *Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932) we watch as a coffin lid is lowered over camera and various faces peer into the coffin through a small window. In *Bambi* (Walt Disney, 1942) Bambi twists his head to look at some opossums hanging from their tails upside down on a branch. The next animated drawing is rotated 180 degrees so that we see the animals

4. Donald Richie's description of the shot is inaccurate. Cf also his judgement of the shot ('simple sloppiness') with the aesthetic of Noël Burch, op cit, pp 6, 15 ('It is only through systematic and thorough exploration of the *structural* possibilities inherent in the cinematic parameters . . . that film will be liberated from the old narrative forms and develop new "open" forms . . .'). Richie, *Ozu*, Los Angeles 1974, p 112.

58 from Bambi's inverted viewpoint, hanging 'straight up' and so apparently defying gravity. *Lady in the Lake* (Montgomery, 1946) is a virtual catalogue of contextual cues. Almost the entire film is shot from the private eye of a detective. At various times we see the detective's arms, feet, his shadow, his image in mirrors, the smoke from his cigarette, as well as extreme close-ups of a telephone receiver, lips approaching for a kiss, and a slap in the face whereupon the camera shakes. Characters also speak directly into the camera. It has even been suggested that there should have been an intermittent blacking out of the screen to indicate occasional blinking of the hero's eyes (Lewis Herman: *A Practical Manual of Screen Playwriting*, New York 1952, p 250). The possible secondary cues seem endless.

Finally, element five ('object') reveals the object suggested by element two of the POV structure. There is the possibility, though rare in practice, that the object, or part of the object, is actually seen in shot A. In that case element five functions to reveal the object either from a new angle or new distance or both. In *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) we see Marion as well as a police car through the back window of her car; next we see the police car from Marion's point of view in the car mirror. These shots alternate through thirteen shots.

Consider, however, the possibility for disruption of the POV structure should the camera, instead of revealing the object, point in another direction. We would then see an object which we believe a character to be looking at, but which, in fact, he is not. In *Equinox Flower* (Ozu, 1958) an apparent point/object shot of a hospital window is undermined when one of two women looking up at it says, 'Mother's room is around there,' which suggests that they may or may not be able to see the window from their vantage point. This ambiguity raises a second question: could we as viewers see the hospital room or was it around a corner?

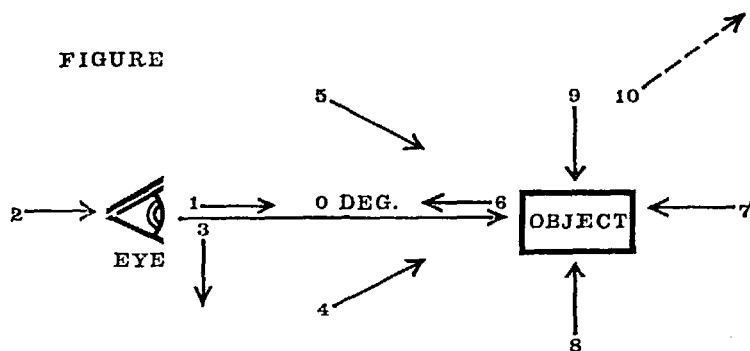
At this stage of the POV structure we are seeing *what* a particular person sees. It is now an easy step to characterise *how* that person sees an object, for instance, by throwing the object out of focus to suggest, say, drunkenness. Thus we have engrafted a sixth element on the POV structure. To satisfy ourselves that the sixth element is indeed distinct consider that it must itself be structural; that is, we understand the use of an out-of-focus shot because the rest of the film is shot *in* focus. We do not consider, however, whether all mental process shots – revealing the dreams, fears, hopes, etc. of a character – are based on the POV structure.

## II Angle of Transition

The five elements of the POV structure require a transition device

since the camera must physically shift between element one (point) and element four (from point). This shift is the physical correlate for a shift in narrative perception from, for instance, objective and omniscient to subjective and personal. The device may take the form of a simple cut, an optical printer effect (dissolves, fades, wipes, etc), or camera movement in which case we watch while the camera repositions. In certain situations where the camera begins close to the subject (point) a fast pan, rack focus, zoom, etc, may be sufficient to indicate a transition from element one (point) to element four (from point) even though the camera set-up has not, in actuality, changed. Whatever device is used, of course, must imply temporal continuity (element three).

Since the initial angle of shot A (point/glance) may be any angle, we choose shot B (point/object) as a reference, and take the line running from the subject's eyes to the object as a reference line. The POV structure is then classified according to the placement of shot B with respect to this line. The accompanying figure represents alternate sites for the location of shot B.



Set-up 1 is the classic POV shot – from the subject's eyes. Set-up 2 is a 'reverse angle' – from behind the subject, usually over one shoulder. In addition to being 'less subjective' than the POV shot, it is a more stable articulation since we view the direct spatial relation of subject and object.

Set-up 3 is a deviant POV – discussed earlier – where the camera reveals an object which we believe a subject to be looking at, but which, in fact, he is not. Set-up 4 is the typical eyeline match, especially when it marks the return to a familiar (previous) angle.

Set-up 5 is the mirror image of set-up 4. It is an important camera location because, for example, where the object is a person, by crossing the 180-degree line one can make it appear that two

60 people are looking at each other while conversing when, in fact, they are looking in opposite directions (as in *Sylvia Scarlett*, Cukor, 1935). Similarly, one can cross the line to make it appear that two people are not looking at each other when, in fact, they are.

Set-up 6 represents the POV of the object and usually occurs when the object is a person. Set-up 7 is a reverse angle of the object. It usually occurs when the object is a person. In *Seven Samurai* (Kurosawa, 1954) it follows a point/glance shot as an alternative to set-ups 1 or 2.

Set-ups 8 and 9 are de-stabilising shots since in their resemblance to set-up 1 – the classic POV – they imply a false space for the subject. And finally, set-up 10 – discussed earlier – is also de-stabilising since it represents a jump into a new space or new scene.

### III A Repertory of Simple Structures

There are two major variants of the POV structure and a number of simple structures. The usual form of the POV is shot A (point/glance) followed by shot B (point/object). This is the form we have discussed up to now. A major alternative form of the POV is the discovered or retrospective POV where shot A *follows* shot B. For example, two men are conversing in an office about a woman suspected of murder. There is a pause in the conversation (or is it the end of the scene?). We then see a high-scale, extreme long shot of the woman sitting on a park bench (shot B). Then we cut to one of the men looking out of the window of the office (shot A). A reverse angle confirms he is looking at the woman from the office window. The conversation now resumes with one man aware that the woman is nearby.

We shall now examine a number of simple variants of the POV structure including structures which may be termed closed, delayed, open, continuing, multiple, embedded, or reflexive structures.

The closed POV takes the form: A, B, A. The point/glance shot is repeated. For example, in *The General* (Keaton, 1926) we see two point/object shots where we look out from under a table and later where we watch the General being loaded by Union troops. Each time we return to the original point/glance shot after the point/object shot – Keaton under the table, Keaton and girl in the woods.

The closed POV has a high degree of narrative stability because the repetition of shot A (an overdetermination) serves to re-establish time and place and what we've seen. The repetition also signals the end of a 'subjective' view. The audience is fully prepared for the camera to establish a new relation (the next voice) vis-à-vis the characters.

Further, time is momentarily suspended in the closed POV as in the traditional subjective flashback or during an inter-title; that is, we do not expect events to be happening to the characters while we are looking at an object or until we fully recognise the repetition (closure) of shot A. The closed POV would seem to be a common structure in traditional Hollywood cinema.

In *Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932), however, the closed POV is undermined. We see David Gray outside an Inn looking in a door toward camera; he glances up (shot A). We cut to a shot of the roof, then pan and tilt down to discover Gray walking along a wall *back* (?) toward the door and looking in the door again (shot B). Thus it is not clear what has been happening while we have been looking at the roof. This illustrates a structural principle of the film whereby the camera is unable to 'keep up' with the events (ie it is not omniscient) and consequently there is a profound tension between on-screen and off-screen space.

The formal variants of the closed POV take the form: A', B, A'' where A'' is a minor variant of A', such as a new angle or new distance in which the subject is seen, at least momentarily, still frozen in his glance before the narrative action resumes. Either A' or A'' or both may be reverse angles. Also common is the structure A, B, and then instead of cutting back to shot A or moving the camera back to A, we see the subject – after a decent interval – step in front of the camera, in effect, creating a reverse angle to remind us of our special viewpoint (eg *The Best Years of Our Lives*, Wyler, 1946). There also exist permutations similar to the above modelled on B, A, B. This discovered and closed POV structure is often used, for example, to emphasise an object or the sudden appearance of an object.

A second simple structure – the first was the closed POV – is the delayed or suspended POV. It often occurs in detective, suspense, or horror films where a character clearly sees something (point/glance) yet the point/object shot is withheld from the audience for a number of shots (while another person is summoned to look at this extraordinary thing) or a number of scenes (when the character is killed by the object). The inverse of this structure would be the case where a point/object shot is given but the point/glance shot is withheld; that is, a discovered and delayed POV. An example occurs in *The Quiller Memorandum* (M Anderson, 1966). We see a high-angle shot of the hero climbing into a car, then window curtains fall across the image. We now realise that someone was watching our hero, but who?

The delayed POV structure may be resolved in a number of ways. Other types of shots may be employed, such as reverse angles (earlier we discussed how these shots were related to the POV). Also larger narrative structures may interact and further delay the POV structure; for example, the POV may be resolved by a later shot but we may not be aware that it was resolved until

62 still later when a narrator explains to us the significance of the shot.<sup>5</sup> Whether or not a flashback structure is employed, the missing shot – when it is recognised – will have retrospective significance because it completes an earlier POV structure; we now know, for example, that the killer is that person we have seen throughout the film.

Related to the delayed POV is the open POV. In this structure, although a point/glance is firmly established, we *never* see the object. Examples include the Indian torture victims of *Ulzana's Raid* (Aldrich, 1972); cloud formations which are earnestly discussed in *Ohayo* (Ozu, 1959); and, after we see a series of roofs with TV antennas, we do not see the roof which has no TV antenna in *Fahrenheit 451* (Truffaut, 1966).

Another simple variant of the POV structure is the continuing POV where one character looks at several objects or one object a number of times. The objects are typically rendered by cutting from object to object or by camera movement – the subjective travelling shot. If the point/object structure continues long enough, it may be necessary to insert a re-establishing shot (ie point/glance). The re-establishing shot functions to remind us of our special viewpoint – although as *Lady in the Lake* (Montgomery, 1946) demonstrates, one does not automatically lose track of the viewpoint – as well as to change the filmic voice and so introduce another level of narrative codes.<sup>6</sup> In the classic Hollywood conversation of alternating medium close-ups, the re-establishing shot is often a reverse angle.

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5. The delayed POV illustrates the fact that in terms of the five narrative codes of Roland Barthes, the POV structure, in general, contains a built-in hermeneutic code. Depending on the precise form, the POV structure may ask the following: what object is someone looking at? Who is looking at the object? What is the spatial or other relation of person and object? What will be the reaction of the person to the object? etc. The hermeneutic is that code which names a subject, states a condition, proposes a question, delays its answer in multifarious ways, and finally discloses the answer which is the truth of the narrative. See *S/Z*, op cit, secs XXXII 'Delay', XXXVII 'The Hermeneutic Sentence', and LXXXIX 'Voice of Truth.'

6. The failure of *Lady in the Lake* (Montgomery, 1946) has been attributed to the fact that in order to internalise a character's look, one has to know the character (Metz, op cit, p 47). One cannot know a character from a purely personal narrational stance (I, or I see) because psychology is an external construct which depends upon the perspective of an *apersonal* narrational voice. Cf Barthes: 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,' op cit, p 263. By way of analogy, one does not understand a film as the personal view of the film-maker (as a real-life person) because there is no context within which to locate the film-maker. Even if the auteur appears in the film, we cannot recognise the 'auteur' who placed him or her within the narration. There is always some filmic voice beyond which it is impossible to go.



In *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) simple two-shot POV structures are repeated in chains to create a continuing POV. There are sixteen POV sequences of six or more shots in the film including at one point forty-two consecutive shots of Marion driving her car and what she sees from behind the wheel (although the sequence does not always maintain temporal continuity). The sustained viewpoint of the continuing POV<sup>7</sup> tends to implicate the viewer in the experience or fate of the character.

The multiple POV is a structure whereby several characters see the same object. It takes the form, or some fragment of the form: A, (B), C, (B), D, E, (B) where B is the object and the other shots are of persons. Note that when a POV is offered for two people who appear together in a single shot, the structure is 'less subjective' than if offered as the view of only one person.

An embedded POV results when a POV structure of one character is nested or contained within a larger POV structure of another character. For example, in *Psycho* we see Marion inside her car glance (shot A) at a policeman outside the car who then glances (shot B) at her car licence plate (shot C). Marion is still watching the policeman (repetition of shot A) as he looks up (repetition of shot B). One characteristic of this structure is that while we have seen something from Marion's viewpoint, we have also seen something that she cannot see: the licence plate. Note, too, that the first appearance of shot B functions both as the point/object shot of A and the point/glance shot for C. The five elements of the POV structure need not be distributed in a fixed pattern of two elements per shot.

When the object of a glance is also a person, then it is possible to alternate POV structures – as in a conversation – centred about two, or more, points. This is the reflexive POV. A character need not stare directly into the camera (for this involves another convention) but the eyes must be very near the line of the camera.

Strictly speaking the reflexive POV takes the form: (A, B), (closer B, A), (closer A, B). This represents three POV structures, each fully defined, from A to B, B to A, A to B. An example occurs at the end of *La Femme Infidèle* (Charbrol, 1968). Of special interest is the final shot of that film which begins as a point/object shot of the wife. When the camera tracks back it may still be a point/object shot (the husband is walking away with the police while looking over his shoulder); but when the camera begins to zoom as well as track in a new direction, the nature of the shot changes. Indeed we watch while the shot slowly *changes* its filmic voice.

In the traditional Hollywood film the complete model of the reflexive POV is often abridged so that the point/object shot

7. There may be limits to the continuing POV. See the discussion of *Lady in the Lake* (Montgomery, 1946) by Metz, op cit, pp 47-48.

64 functions also as the point/glance shot for the next series. Hence the above, complete model would be rendered in only four shots instead of six: (A, [B], (A], B). In *Psycho* such a series is created by alternating close-ups of Marion and a police officer through nineteen shots.

The use of a mirror or other reflective surface in the mise-en-scène in conjunction with a POV structure may result in rather complex permutations. The mirror image, for example, alters direction – by 180 degrees – as well as space – the image appears to be in front of the camera when, in fact, it is behind the camera. In addition, the mirror represents two objects: itself and its reflected image. Further, when the reflection is that of the subject (not to mention another mirror), a form of reflexive POV is generated. Thus a mirror may, depending on the circumstances, undermine one or more of four elements of the POV structure – all except the transition element.

## Conclusion

As a general rule, the viewer's relationship to the characters in a film is in a constant state of flux. At times we know more than one character or even all the characters know about their world; at other times we know less than they know. The POV structure is a mechanism whereby we experience contemporaneously with a character. The structure may be broken down into five elements which are usually distributed in two shots. Larger POV structures may be constructed from these elements by combining them in various ways. Thus the POV structure is a parameter which may undergo repetition and variation.

It is possible to vary or de-stabilise the POV structure in a multitude of ways. The result shifts the voice of the film and may lead the viewer into impossible time and space relationships. Crucial to the POV structure is the placement of the point/object shot with respect to a reference line running from the subject's eyes to the object. More subtle deviations from the POV structure are possible by undercutting only a single element or by building a larger POV structure which culminates by calling its own structure into question.

Moreover, since our conception of 'character' in a film is itself a coded construction (cf Barthes: *S/Z*, op cit, secs XXVIII 'Character and Figure', XLI 'The Proper Name' and LXXXI 'Voice of the Person'), the POV structure may best be understood as an adjunct to that system, in effect, pointing to the presence – the existence – of character. Variation, and even subversion, of the POV structure is, therefore, a device through which our perspective on character is altered and even, at times, challenged.

## Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation 1926-41

Edward Buscombe

### I

'The film industry': 'the cinema'. How are these terms related in film criticism? 'The film industry' describes an economic system, a way (or ways) of organising the structure of production, distribution and consumption. Historically such organisation has, in Britain and America, conformed to the usual pattern of capitalist activity; film can be seen as an industry like any other. It has passed from the primitive stage of small-scale entrepreneurial activity to the formation of large-scale monopolies, securing their position by vertical integration, spreading from production into distribution and exhibition. Since the War the industry has, like other forms of business, developed towards diversification and the formation of multinational corporations. In other respects too film has developed like other industries. Production in particular has been based on a division of labour, of a fairly extreme kind. From early days the industry has employed the techniques of mass advertising, and it has required the injection of huge sums of capital, resulting in turn in the passing of control of the industry from its original owners and from the primary producers.

In film criticism, then, the term 'film industry' implies a way of looking at film which minimises its differences from other forms of economic activity; a way which is of course predominantly that of those who actually own the industry. Its characteristic descriptions are sufficiently indicative of a perspective: 'the trade', 'marketing', 'exploitation', a 'package', 'product'.

'The cinema' suggests something else. While the term might, notionally, encompass the industry, the pull is surely in a different direction. 'The cinema' implies film as art. As Raymond Williams has shown with convincing detail in *Culture and Society*, the opposition between art and industry has a long history in our culture. The division between the two is experienced everywhere as deep,

66 but nowhere deeper than in film. On the one hand we are given to understand is the industry, churning out product for financial gain. On the other are artists, creating enduring works of personal expression or comment on life and society. Such an opposition has taken different forms at different times. Sometimes it has been geographical. In America there was Hollywood, the industrial system par excellence. In Europe (usually excluding Britain, apart from its documentaries) there were artists: Renoir, Dreyer, Bergman, Antonioni, etc. Later the auteur theory, as applied to American cinema, changed the emphasis. Though Hollywood was still an industry, through diligent critical work some artists could be winnowed from the chaff, artists who against the odds managed by luck, cunning or sheer genius to overcome the system, the industry. The auteur theory, whatever its 'theory' may have been, did not in practice abolish the distinction between art and industry; it merely shifted the line of demarcation.

One might suppose that a little common sense would tell us that such a distinction is nonsense, that all film is both industry *and* art, in some sense. Even the lowest, most despised products (choose your own examples) are made with some kind of art. Do they not share the same language as the acknowledged masterpieces: do they not tell a story, try to affect the spectators' emotions? They may do it more or less effectively, but isn't this a difference of degree, not of kind? Conversely, in the making of the most spiritual and sublime films grubby bank notes change hands. The film stock on which the masterpiece is recorded may come from the same batch used to shoot the potboiler on the adjoining stage.

Yet proof that the mutual exclusion of art and industry operates at a level too deep to be affected by mere common sense can be found not only in the dominant critical attitudes but in the organisation of social institutions. To give an example close to home: the British Film Institute was set up, as its Memorandum of Association states, 'to encourage the development of the art of the film'. At the same time it is stated that the BFI is not permitted 'to control nor attempt to interfere with purely trade matters'. Art not only can but must be divorced from industry. And the split is preserved even in the structure of government. Whereas the BFI is administered by the Department of Education and Science, the film industry comes under the Department of Trade and Industry. Thus the opposition art/industry has to be seen not merely as a 'mistake' in film criticism which can be easily rectified by a more careful look at the facts, but as the result of a whole practice of thinking, talking, writing and disseminating inscribed in institutions like the BFI, those parts of the education system that handle film, plus also exhibition/viewing practice – the art-house circuit and its audience(s) – the 'immaterial' thought both reflecting and being part of this apparatus; in short, as part of an ideology.

The main concern here, however, is not with the origins of such an opposition but with its consequence for film criticism. This may be baldly stated: there has been scarcely any serious attempt to think the relationship between art and industry with regard to films produced in what have historically been for us the two most important film-making countries, namely our own and the United States. Criticism has been devoted not to relating them but to separating them out, and in practice this has meant that critics have concentrated on the beauties and mysteries of art and left the industry, presumably a tougher plant, to take care of itself. Study of the industry might require knowledge of, say, economics or of how films are actually made, knowledge which critics have not been expected to acquire. The main effort of criticism, therefore, has gone into the study of film texts viewed as autonomous, self-sufficient entities; or, occasionally, as reflections of society, but certainly not as reflections of the industry which produced them, unless they are being dismissed as rubbish. Even recent work deriving from structuralism and concerned to open up the text, to 'deconstruct' it, has tended to take the film as 'given' and has ignored questions of how the organisation of a film text might relate to the organisation of an industry or to specific working practices.

It is in respect of Hollywood, the largest field of activity in both film-making and criticism, that the lack of a history of the industry is most glaring. Of course there is a certain amount of information around. Statistics have occasionally been assembled (a number of Government and trade reports on Hollywood in the 1930's are listed in the notes of Leo C Rosten's *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers*, a book which has some useful material on this period). There are one or two books, again on the 1930's, which assemble some facts about the economics of the industry (for example, F D Klingender and Stuart Legg, *The Money Behind the Screen* and Mae D Huettig, *Economic Control Of The Motion Picture Industry*). But of course they don't attempt to make any connections between the economics and the actual films produced. There is also the ragbag of publicity releases, inaccurate box-office returns and general gossip which makes up the trade press (*Film Daily*, *Motion Picture Herald*, *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, etc). To this may be added a host of 'biographies' (or ghosted autobiographies) of prominent industry figures, of which *Hollywood Rajah* by Bosley Crowther (on Louis B Mayer) and *King Cohn* by Bob Thomas (on Harry Cohn) are representative examples. Little that is useful can be gleaned from such works, which mostly string together collections of anecdotes about the 'great men'. On such questions as the financial structures within which they were obliged to operate or the actual working methods of their studios they are for the most part silent. Of studio histories, properly speaking, there are none, with the possible exception of Richard Schickel's

68 book *The Disney Version*, which is hampered by his failure to get any cooperation from the Disney studio itself; a fact, of course, that is not without its significance, since it indicates the difficulties of this kind of work.

Indeed, the neglect of industry history is not only a consequence of critical attitudes and priorities which have abandoned the field to those whose interest does not go beyond 'personalities'. It is also the result of very real practical problems. The fact is that the history of the American film industry is extremely difficult to write, because many of the basic materials that would be needed are simply not available. The statistics are incomplete and unreliable. The trade press presents only the acceptable face of the business, even when one can get access to it (the BFI Library, virtually the only collection of such periodicals in Britain, has no run of *Variety*, though there are plans to acquire one). The biographies, and studio histories, where they exist at all (for example Bosley Crowther's *The Lion's Share*, on MGM), are largely based on reminiscences. Concrete documented evidence in the form, say, of studio memoranda, accounts and other records, is almost totally lacking. If such records still exist they are mostly locked away in studio vaults. And the history of technological development in Hollywood has still to be written. Lastly, the films themselves; such prints as have been preserved are often impossible to see. The situation is little different from that which exists in relation to the history of the Elizabethan stage, with this exception, that infinitely less method and application has gone into researching it.

The result is that when Hollywood has been written about its industrial dimension has been ignored. Much of the writing has been based on an idea of history as one damned thing after another. Even such a prestigious work as Lewis Jacob's *The Rise Of The American Film* scarcely rises above this, most sections being simply annotated film lists. The only principle to compete has been auteurism, which leaves film history at the stage which history proper reached in the nineteenth century when Carlyle defined it as the lives of great men. Deliberate attempts to get away from auteurism, such as Colin McArthur's *Underworld USA* (on the crime film) and Jim Kitses' *Horizons West* (on the Western) are ultimately broken-backed books. Genres may be related to aspects of American history, but in the end it is the auteurs who dominate the account.

Some recent, more promising directions have been pursued. Patrick Ogle's work on deep-focus (*Screen* v 13 n 1) or that of John Ellis and Charles Barr on Ealing Studios (*Screen* v 15 nn 1-2, v 16 n 1) have from different perspectives tried to make connections between films and the nature of the industry which produced them. *The Velvet Light Trap* has brought to light valuable material on the studio system, though the use that has been made of it has often been disappointing. But the gaps in our knowledge are still

## II

One consequence of the existence of such gaps has been that attempts to relate Hollywood films to the society which produced them have simply by-passed the industry altogether. The result has been a series of short circuits. Hollywood films are seen as merely 'reflecting' society. On the one hand is society, seen as a collection of facts, attitudes, psychological patterns or whatever. On the other are the films, where one sees such facts, attitudes, etc mirrored. Though it may be conceded that the mirror sometimes distorts, in so far as there is a theory behind such a view it is a naively realist one, and indeed how could it be otherwise? If there is no conception of Hollywood as an industry with its own history, specific practices, economic relationships, technological and other material constraints, if film is seen as something that somehow mysteriously appears and having appeared is simply there, fixed and given, then how is one to understand the nature of any mediation? To confine ourselves again to the period of the 1930's, a book such as Andrew Bergman's *We're In The Money* devotes a mere four pages to 'A Note on the Movie Industry and the Depression' which ends thus: 'The preliminaries completed, we proceed to the black and white footage itself.' And in the black and white footage the social comment can simply be read off as if the films were so many sociologists' reports. Here is an admittedly rather extreme example: 'Tod Browning's 1932 MGM film, *Freaks*, had a cast made up of pinheads, human torsos, midgets, and dwarfs, like nothing ever in the movies. And what more stunted a year than 1932 for such a film?' (p 168).

One might expect that more specifically Marxist attempts to relate Hollywood to American society would display a little more rigour and subtlety. Bourgeois cultural theories, with their assumptions about the values of artistic freedom and personal expression, are obviously ill-equipped to deal with a medium so conditioned by money, technology and organisational structures. Books such as Bergman's, which dispense with most of that theory (though never completely; some auteurs, such as Capra and Vidor, make an appearance) seem to have no theory at all to replace it. Marxism, on the other hand, proposes a sophisticated understanding of the relations between society, a system of production and the actual product. Yet such Marxist models as have been put forward for understanding Hollywood have suffered from a crudity which has had the effect of deadening further thought. The crudest model of all is that encapsulated in Godard's phrase 'Nixon-Paramount'. The model implied in such a phrase has had obvious attractions for the political avant-garde and indeed contains some truth. But

70 the truth contained in such vulgar Marxism is so vague and general as to have scarcely any use at all. Ideological products such as films are seen as directly caused by the nature of the economic base of society. A capitalist system produces capitalist films, and that is all there is to it. Alternatively, but the slight sophistication is scarcely a modification, the products of Hollywood are bourgeois and capitalist because the particular industry which produces them is capitalist. And the more specific the model becomes the more its crudity is exposed. Thus in the first section of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* text on *Young Mr Lincoln* (translated in *Screen* v 13 n 3) we are told that since Hollywood is involved with big business its ideology is not just a generally capitalist one. It supports the more reactionary wing of the political spectrum represented by the Republican Party.

The *Cahiers* text is only one example of a desire to show not only that Hollywood is a part of bourgeois ideology in general but that some Hollywood films are intended to carry a specific and reactionary message which has a direct reference to a particular political situation. Another example of such over-politicisation comes in a recent issue of *Jump Cut* n 4 Nov-Dec 1974, which contains an interpretation of *King Kong* as an anti-Roosevelt tract. The article conveniently states its premises in a footnote:

' This article is built round two suppositions. First, that all huge business corporations (such as RKO) are conservative Republican unless demonstrated otherwise, and that their products (like *King Kong*) will reinforce their interests instead of betraying them. Second, that the auteur theory in its standard application is not a germane approach when dealing with a political film, especially under the tight studio control of the 1930's. A political film would only be allowed release if its philosophy was in line with that of the studio which made it. Therefore, RKO studio will be regarded as the true "auteur" of *King Kong*, despite the innumerable personal touches of its artistic crew.'

Although the phrase 'unless demonstrated otherwise' indicates that the author, Gerald Peary, is aware of the dangers of over-simple generalisations, his assumptions still seem open to two major objections. Firstly, is it not possible that even in Hollywood (not noted perhaps for its political sophistication) there were in the 1930's people who could see that the survival of capitalism (and hence of their 'huge corporations') was not necessarily synonymous with the victory of the Republican Party, especially a Republican Party so discredited as the one which had been led to electoral disaster and intellectual bankruptcy by Herbert Hoover? Secondly, what exactly *are* the interests of such corporations? In the long term, obviously, the survival of a system which allowed them to make profits. But in the short term surely it was those profits themselves. Is it to be assumed that studio executives saw



the possibility of profits in attacking a leader who had so recently demonstrated his popularity at the polls (especially among the cinema-going section of the public)? Or should we assume that the political commitment of the studio executives overcame their dedication to profits? 71

It seems unlikely, but our ignorance about Hollywood generally and about the particular organisation of RKO is such that we cannot answer these questions. Precisely for this reason we ought to beware of assuming any answers. Even if we do assume, with the authors in *Cahiers* and *Jump Cut*, that a studio is owned by big business and that one of its products promotes the political and hence economic interests of the company (I say apparently because the actual interpretation of the films seems open to question), it does not necessarily follow that the political meaning is the direct result of who owns the studio. *Post hoc* is not *propter hoc*.

The lack of any detailed knowledge of industry history, then, suggests caution on the question of the political orientation of Hollywood in the 1930's. Firstly, is it true that the film industry was controlled by big business? And is this the same as the Republican Party (there was business influence among the Democrats too)? Secondly, if it is true can one assume a direct effect on the ideology of Hollywood films? Even the term ideology seems to pose a problem here. It is one thing to argue that, using the term in its classical Marxist sense (or as refined by Althusser) to mean a general world view or structure of thought situated primarily below the conscious level, Hollywood films are ideological expressions of bourgeois society. It is quite another to argue that they support a specific set of political attitudes. Bourgeois society is more than simply the Republican Party. And in any case Marxist theory only claims that ideological products are determined *in the last instance* by the economic relations existing at the base of society. The arguments about *Young Mr Lincoln* and *King Kong* appear to assume that facts about who controls the film industry can provide a sufficient explanation of a film's ideology, ignoring the dimension of the institutional structures which may intervene between the economic base and the final product. Without a knowledge of these structures one cannot say that these films are *not* propaganda; but if they were intended as such, as the *Cahiers* and *Jump Cut* articles imply, it is a strange sort of propaganda which requires an ingenious interpretation thirty or forty years later to make its point. Surely it would have to be demonstrated that such a reading was available to an audience at the time.

### III

These problems were thrown into relief by a viewing some time

72 ago of *American Madness*, directed for Columbia in 1932 by Frank Capra. The story of the film concerns Dickson, the manager of a small-town bank (played by Walter Huston). The directors of the bank are financiers of the old school (pre-Keynesians), dedicated to tight money policies which they pursue ruthlessly and selfishly. Dickson, however, has a different view of what the function of a bank should be. He believes that money should be put to work to create jobs and opportunities. His policy is to lend to small businessmen, trusting in his own assessment of their good intentions rather than in the security they can offer. His beliefs are put to the test when a run on the bank occurs; the run is stopped and his faith in his clients vindicated when the little people he has helped rally round to deposit money and so restore confidence in the bank.

The programme note which accompanied the screening of the film at the National Film Theatre suggested that the character of Dickson might have been based on A H Giannini, a California banker who was influential in Columbia's affairs in the 1930's. Such a suggestion raises one immediate difficulty, in that it seems to assume that the apparent, or manifest, meaning of the film is the only one, and ignores the possibility that the latent meaning may be quite different. The film might be about other things besides banking. It excludes, that is, the possibility of analysing the film along the lines of the *Young Mr Lincoln* text, which finds that despite the film's apparent project of supporting the Republican cause in the 1940 presidential election, the 'real' meaning of the film undermines this. (The problem of such readings, despite their obvious attractions, is that it is never explained how in practice the subversive meaning of the film becomes available to the people to whom it might be some use, ie the working class.) Nevertheless, the suggestion seemed worth following up because of the possibility that it might throw some light on the question of Hollywood's relation to politics in the 1930's, and on the nature of the production system generally. And this might in turn tell us something about Capra's films.

Robert Mundy, in a review of Capra's autobiography in the *American Cinema* (v 7 n 1, Fall 1971, p 56), speculates on how it was that Capra was able to make films which so closely embodied his personal ideas. He suggests two reasons: firstly, that Capra was working for a small studio where freedom was greater, and secondly, that Capra's vision 'was unusually consonant with the vision of America which Hollywood purveyed with such commercial success in the 1930's. Ideologically his films were rarely at odds with the image of life which the studios believed the public wanted to see.' Mundy avoids the facile assumption that Capra was 'in touch' with America, and that his films arise out of some special relationship to the people and the mood of the time. Instead, he suggests that his work is an expression of the point of view of his studio. He concludes, however, that we need to know more: 'A

persuasive history of Columbia in the 1930's [is] needed before an informed critical account of Capra's work can be written.' Quite. The problem is to know where to start, given the problems of such research outlined above. Mr Giannini seemed to offer a way in.

He is referred to in a number of books about Hollywood, but as far as I know never more than in passing, as a prominent Californian banker who was involved in movie financing. In several of the references there is a curious uncertainty about his initials. Sometimes he is called A P Giannini, sometimes A H. Thus Philip French in his 'informal' history of the Hollywood tycoons *The Movie Moguls* mentions him on p 25: 'In fact the first banker to take the cinema seriously was the Californian A P Giannini, the son of an Italian immigrant, whose Bank of Italy (later renamed the Bank of America) has played an important part in movie finance since before the first world war.' On p 79 we read: 'A H Giannini, the influential movie financier whose Bank of Italy had a special claim on Hollywood consciences of whatever religious denomination.'

The mystery of A H or A P was only cleared up when I looked up Giannini in the *National Cyclopædia of American Biography*. It appears that there were two of them. (Obviously I am not the first person since Mr Giannini père to be aware of this fact, but it seems as though Philip French was not when he wrote his book. Of such confusions is film history made.) It's worth giving some details of their careers, since they are relevant to Capra's film. A H and A P (or to give them their full names, Attilio Henry and Amadeo Peter) were brothers. Both their parents were natives of Italy; their father had been a hotel keeper but had come to California to try farming. Amadeo was born in 1870 and his brother four years later. The older brother had gone to work at the age of twelve in his stepfather's firm of wholesale commission agents in San Francisco, and while still in his twenties he formed the Columbus Savings and Loan Society. In 1904 he founded the Bank of Italy. Giannini's bank was at the time of a novel kind. Branches were set up in small towns across the country to attract the savings of the man in the street and Giannini even started savings schemes in schools. His bank specialised in making loans to small businesses with minimal collateral and introduced the practice of lending money for house purchase repayable in monthly instalments. He appears to have been a man of some determination and imagination; during the great San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, Giannini was the first to reopen his bank, setting up his desk on the waterfront while the fire still raged. By 1930 he had built up his banking interests to the point where the holding company, the Transamerica Corporation, was the largest of its kind in the world with assets of \$1,000 million. Giannini's unorthodox methods did not endear him to more conservative financiers on Wall Street; particularly deplorable was his policy of encouraging wide public

74 ownership of his corporation and of assisting his employees to become stockholders through profit-sharing schemes.

His brother Attilio (sometimes called Dr Giannini, though he abandoned medicine when made vice-president of his brother's Bank of Italy) was involved in various movie companies between the world wars. In 1920 he lent Chaplin half a million dollars to make *The Kid*. In 1936 he became president and chairman of the Board of United Artists and though he resigned from this position in 1938 he retained an influential position in the film industry by virtue of his place on the voting trust which controlled Universal Pictures. He was also involved with several so-called independent production companies such as Selznick International Pictures and Lesser-Lubitsch. It's worth pointing out that none of these organisations possessed large chains of movie theatres. It was the tangible assets of real estate which tempted the Wall Street banks into movie finance in the 1920's. Giannini does at least seem to have been more interested in making pictures.

Giannini's main importance for present purposes is his role in Columbia. The company was originally formed in 1920 as CBC, the letters standing for the names of the three men who set it up: Harry Cohn, Joe Brandt and Harry's brother Jack. All of them had previously worked for Carl Laemmle at Universal. Attilio Giannini lent them \$100,000 to get started. In 1924 the company changed its name to Columbia Pictures Corporation (possibly an echo of the Columbus Savings and Loan Society?). Giannini continued to be closely involved. Although in 1929 the studio decided to establish their stock on the New York exchange, 96 per cent of the voting stock was concentrated in the hands of a voting trust. In 1932 Joe Brandt was bought out by Harry Cohn (after Jack Cohn had attempted to enlist Giannini's support in a coup against his brother) and thereafter the voting trust which controlled the company consisted of the two Cohns and Giannini. Unlike most studios at this time Columbia had no debts to the New York investment banks and instead was run as a family business.

Giannini's position was therefore a powerful one. Unfortunately one has no actual knowledge of how he used it. All that can be done is to suggest what his influence might have been given the kind of background from which he and his brother came. The Gianninis were quite separate from the New York banking establishment. Not only was theirs a different kind of business (deposit as opposed to investment banking), involving them with different kinds of clients; they were Catholics (unlike the Rockefellers and Morgans), they were second-generation immigrants, they came from the other side of the country, and their social attitudes were, as far as one can tell, less patrician. A P's entry in the *National Cyclopædia* says that he 'has ever been known as a friend of the poor and struggling' and if ever a banker could be so described it seems likely that he was. Not surprisingly, therefore, he supported the

Banking Act introduced by Roosevelt in 1935 because, he said, he preferred a measure of government control to domination of the banks by the Wall Street establishment. In 1936 he actively supported Roosevelt's campaign for a second term, at a time when Wall Street considered FDR as no better than a Communist. It seems reasonable to assume that his brother shared his liberal views.

The Gianninis might, then, be seen as a kind of contradiction in terms: populist bankers. The populists of the nineteenth century had regarded bankers as the physical embodiment of all that was evil, and believed that the agricultural problems of the Mid-West were largely caused by a conspiracy of monopolists on Wall Street keeping interest rates up and farm prices down. (Amadeo Giannini was, we are told, greatly interested in agricultural progress.) The little man, the populists contended, stood no chance against those who commanded such resources and used them for selfish purposes. But the Gianninis believed in deliberately aiding such small businessmen and farmers who got no help from Wall Street. In this respect they are in line with the policies of the New Deal, which attempted to get big business under some kind of government control while at the same time trying to raise farm prices and help small firms and individuals by encouraging banks to make loans, by refinancing mortgages and so on.

This too is Dickson's policy in *American Madness* and it seems plausible that the character is indeed based on Dr Giannini. The question then is, what do we make of it? A simple and tempting theory might be constructed: Capra's film doesn't so much capture what 'people' were thinking at the time as represent the thinking of a New Dealer on the voting trust controlling Columbia. Such a theory certainly has its attractions. Firstly, it provides a corrective to the crude assumption that Hollywood = big business = the Republican Party. Secondly, other Capra films such as *Mr Deeds Goes To Town*, *Mr Smith Goes To Washington*, *You Can't Take It With You* also embody the populism that was a powerful element in the New Deal. Thirdly, the situation of Columbia itself, quite apart from the beliefs of those in control, might well be seen as impelling it towards the New Deal coalition of anti-establishment forces. Despite the Academy Awards Capra collected for the studio in the 1930's it never entirely freed itself from its Poverty Row origins. Although the company bought its own studio in 1926 and in 1929 set up a national distribution organisation, at the beginning of the 1930's Columbia was still producing less than thirty features a year (to MGM's forty-three) and most of these were destined for the lower half of a double bill. Output increased steadily during the decade, but the studio was never in the same league as the majors. In 1935, for example, the total volume of business of Loew's, the parent company of MGM, was \$85 million; Columbia's was \$16 million. Thus Loew's had nearly 22 per cent

76 of the total volume of business of the industry, Columbia only 4 per cent. And despite the characteristically violent swings in the film industry each year from profit to loss and back again, these relative percentages did not change for the rest of the decade. The reason why Columbia was unable to increase its share of business is that, unlike the major studios, it had no chain of theatres of its own which could serve as a secure outlet for its product. All the money it made came from the sale of its own pictures to theatres owned by other studios. MGM and the other majors could, and frequently did, recoup losses on their own films by profits on the exhibition of other companies' output.

But a potential advantage of this relative weakness was that Columbia preserved its financial independence. It had not had to borrow heavily from the banks to finance the acquisition of theatre chains, and as a result the studio was still in the control of the men who founded it, the two Cohns and Giannini. Its independence of Wall Street meant that it might well become the focus of anti-establishment forces, and that if it did it had the freedom to make films which reflected that, always providing of course that it could sell them to the theatres.

But caution is necessary even before trying to test out such a thesis. Capra in his autobiography devotes several pages to recording how charmed he was by Roosevelt's personality; yet, he says, this only made him 'almost a Democrat'. One might suppose that Capra, a first generation immigrant, an Italian Catholic born in Sicily, was a natural Democrat. But the political content of his films, while embodying support for the underdog, does not attach itself to any Party. His belief in the people goes hand in hand with a classically populist distrust of *all* their leaders. And other tendencies in his films, such as a pervasive anti-intellectualism and a hostility to central government, are certainly not characteristic of the New Deal.

Nevertheless there is a kind of radicalism in his films which would certainly not have commended itself to the fiercely Republican Louis B Mayer, for example, and it therefore seems worth pursuing the thesis that Columbia might have been a focus for Roosevelt sympathisers. Harry Cohn, who controlled the production side of the company throughout the period, appears to have had no interest in politics at all. It is true that he visited Mussolini in 1933 after Columbia had released a complimentary documentary entitled *Mussolini Speaks*. But Cohn seems to have been more impressed with the intimidating lay-out of the dictator's office than with his politics. When he returned to Hollywood he rearranged his own office in imitation. Capra remarked in an interview at the National Film Theatre that Cohn didn't care what the politics of his studio's films were. His concern was with their money-making potential, which he estimated with a 'foolproof device. . . . If my fanny squirms it's bad. If my fanny doesn't

squirm it's good. It's as simple as that' (quoted in *King Cohn*, p 142). If Giannini had wanted the studio to take a pro-New-Deal stance, then it seems as though Cohn would have had no particular objections. 77

The only way of testing whether there was such a policy, in default of any access to whatever records of the company may still exist, is to look at the films that Columbia made during the period and to find out what one can about the people who made them. It's at this point that the sheer physical difficulties of this kind of work intrude. Taking the period 1926-41, from just before the introduction of sound to a year or so after Capra left Columbia (an arbitrary choice, but less arbitrary than some, and one which corresponds very roughly to the period of the depression and the consequent New Deal, as far as World War II), Columbia, despite being one of the smaller studios, made on my calculations 627 feature films. (The figure may not be exact because the *Film Daily Year Book*, from which the calculation is made, lists the films of each year twice, once under each studio and once in alphabetical order for the whole industry. Titles appearing in one list don't always appear in the other.) To make those films the company employed 67 different producers, 171 directors, and 269 writers. (The figure for writers is from 1928; they are not credited in the *Year Book* before that date.) By writers is meant those credited with a screenplay. Authors of the original stories from which the films were made might amount to another two or three hundred people. There are also fifteen people whose names appear at one time or another as directors of the company, Columbia Pictures Corporation.

These are the people within the organisation whose position would have allowed them to influence the political content of the films. One might wish to argue that everyone, actors, cameramen, designers, right down to the studio policemen, had some kind of influence, however small. Melvyn Douglas, for example, who acted in many films for Columbia in the 1930's, was active in liberal causes. I have excluded these workers from consideration mainly because, given the nature of the production process, as far as one understands it, and the rigid division of labour, their control over the political content (if any) of a film would have been less. Actors didn't make up their own lines. In any case one has to stop somewhere, and it's not too easy to find out who the studio policemen were.

One is thus faced with a preliminary list of 522 people; to be precise, it is slightly less because the division of labour was not absolute and some writers directed or vice versa. But there is not much overlapping, and the total must be around 500 (this for one small studio during a mere fifteen years of its fifty-year existence). The BFI Library has a card index system which allows one to check whether the Library has entries on individuals in books, periodicals

78 or on microfiche. I accordingly looked up everyone who worked on more than the occasional film. Very few of these names appear in the index and when they do it is often merely a reference to a tiny cutting in *Variety* recording the person's death and giving a short list of the films they worked on. (This is not a criticism of the state of the Library but of the state of film history.)

A few things do emerge. Columbia seems to have been, in the higher echelons, a tight-knit community (one precondition perhaps of a consistent policy). One of the producers was Ralph Cohn, the son of Jack. Everett Riskin, another producer, was the older brother of Robert, who wrote several of Capra's screenplays. Sam Briskin, general manager of the studio in the early 1930's and executive in charge of production from 1938 to 1942, was the brother-in-law of Abe Schneider, treasurer of the company for most of this period. Briskin's brother, Irving, was another producer at Columbia. Yet this doesn't tell us much about an industry where the pull of family relationships was always strong and where 'the son-in-law also rises' was a standard joke.

On the political affiliations of the vast majority, I found no information at all, nor even any information on their lives which would permit a guess. Some very few wrote books or had books written about them, but with the exception of Cohn and Capra their careers were peripheral to Columbia. A few more have been the subject of articles in film magazines, and from these one can glean scraps of information. Richard Maibaum, who wrote a few scripts for the studio, was the author of some anti-lynching and anti-Nazi plays before coming to Hollywood. Dore Schary, whose Democrat sympathies were well known, was also a writer at Columbia in the 1930's. So, very occasionally, were Donald Ogden Stewart, associated with left wing causes at the time, and Edward Chodorov, involved with committees for refugees from Spain and Germany and later more or less black-listed. But this scarcely amounts to much. Stewart, after all, wrote a lot of scripts for MGM.

More significant, at first sight, than the presence of 'liberals', is the fact that exactly half of the Hollywood Ten were actually employed at Columbia during the 1930's; namely Edward Dmytryk, Dalton Trumbo, Herbert Biberman, John Howard Lawson and Lester Cole. But a concerted Communist effort at the studio is hardly likely. Only Dmytryk worked there more than occasionally, and he during his time as a contract director was making routine B-feature films (musicals, horror pictures, thrillers) which, one must assume, offered little scope for the kind of social comment Dmytryk later put into *Crossfire*. There were one or two other Communists working at Columbia who testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee four years after the 1947 hearings which sent the Ten to jail. Paul Jarrico, who wrote for Columbia the screenplays of *No Time To Marry* (1938) and *The Face Behind*



*The Mask* (1941), was called before the Committee in 1951 but refused to testify and pleaded the 5th Amendment. Another called before the Committee in 1951 was Sidney Buchman. One of Harry Cohn's favourite writers, Buchman specialised in comedy. Among his credits for Columbia are: *Whom The Gods Destroy* (1934); *I'll Love You Always*, *Love Me Forever*, *She Married Her Boss* (1935), *The King Steps Out*, *Theodora Goes Wild*, *Adventure in Manhattan*, *The Music Goes Round* (1936), *Holiday* (1938), *Mr Smith Goes To Washington* (1939), *The Howards of Virginia* (1940), *Here Comes Mr Jordan* (1941). Buchman admitted that he had been in the Communist Party from 1938 to 1945, but refused to supply the Committee with the list of names of other members they required and was cited for contempt. He was found guilty and given a one-year suspended sentence and a \$150 fine.

Buchman clearly occupied an influential position at Columbia. He was a producer as well as a writer and was associated with some of Columbia's greatest successes in the late 1930's and early 1940's. But if *Mr Smith* is satirical about Washington life, it retains an unswerving, even touching, faith in American political institutions, and it is difficult to see that Buchman's membership of the Communist Party had any great effect on what he wrote. Indeed many of his associates appear to have been surprised to learn that he was a Communist.

It may be that a more detailed search through such records as are available would turn up some decisive evidence. But on what has been presented so far it seems unlikely that, Dr Giannini notwithstanding, there was any deliberate policy of favouritism to the New Deal or left causes. The same conclusion seems likely to follow from the films. Here again one is attempting generalisations based on woefully inadequate knowledge, because, apart from those directed by Capra, I have seen very few of the films Columbia made during the period. Nevertheless some impressions can be gained from looking at the records. In the late 1920's and early 1930's the staples of the studio's output were adventure and action films, comedies, often mildly risqué, and the occasional exposé (one of Jack Cohn's first successes at Universal was to convince Carl Laemmle of the box office potential of *Traffic In Souls*, a sensationalist feature on the white slave trade). Westerns and thrillers made up the rest of the production schedule. Of course titles can be misleading, but a list of the films produced in 1928 probably gives a fair indication of at least the type of films being made:

*That Certain Thing*, *The Wife's Relations*, *Lady Raffles*, *So This Is Love?* *Woman's Way*, *Sporting Age*, *Matinee Idol*, *Desert Bride*, *Broadway Daddies*, *After The Storm*, *Golf Widows*, *Modern Mothers*, *Name The Woman*, *Ransom*, *Way Of The Strong*, *Beware Of Blondes*, *Say It with Sables*, *Virgin Lips*, *Scarlet Lady*, *Court*

80 *Martial, Runaway Girls, Streets Of Illusion, Sinners' Parade, Driftwood, Stool Pigeon, The Power Of The Press, Nothing To Wear, Submarine, The Apache, The Lone Wolf's Daughter, Restless Youth, The Sideshow.*

Besides Capra, directors working regularly for Columbia at this time included the veteran director of serials George B Seitz (*The Perils Of Pauline*), and Erle Kenton, another veteran who had been in pictures since 1914. The policy, one guesses, was one of efficient professionalism dedicated to getting the most out of Columbia's meagre resources. Not only did Columbia make less films; they also spent less on each production than the major studios. (Few of their films at this time ran more than seventy minutes.) This would seem to leave little room for the carefully considered personal statements of the kind Capra aspired to later in the 1930's. This is not to say that there was no possibility of social or political comment, however, as the history of Warners at the same time shows.

After Capra's astonishing success with *It Happened One Night* in 1934, which won Columbia its first Oscars and enormously increased the studio's prestige, pictures of the earlier type were supplemented by the occasional more expensive production. Though Columbia had contract players of its own (for example Jack Holt, Ralph Bellamy or, in Westerns, Buck Jones and Charles Starrett), they could not compare in box-office appeal with the stars of bigger studios. Columbia could not afford the budgets which having bigger stars would have entailed. On the other hand it could never break into the big time without them. Harry Cohn's solution to this vicious circle was to invite successful directors from other studios to make occasional pictures for Columbia, pictures which would be given larger than usual budgets and which would have stars borrowed from other studios. Careful planning permitted short production schedules and kept costs down to what Columbia could afford. Capra too was given increasingly larger budgets and outside stars. Thus a number of big-name directors came to work at Columbia during the later 1930's, often tempted by the offer of being allowed to produce their own films. Among the titles produced at Columbia during the period after *It Happened One Night* were:

1934: *20th Century* (dir Howard Hawks, with John Barrymore and Carole Lombard), *The Captain Hates The Sea* (dir Lewis Milestone, with Victor McLaglen and John Gilbert); 1935: *The Whole Town's Talking* (dir John Ford, with Edward G Robinson), *She Married Her Boss* (dir Gregory La Cava, with Claudette Colbert), *She Couldn't Take It* (dir Tay Garnett, with George Raft and Joan Bennett), *Crime and Punishment* (dir Josef von Sternberg, with Peter Lorre); 1936: *Theodora Goes Wild* (dir Richard Boleslavski, with Irene Dunne); 1937: *The Awful Truth* (dir Leo McCarey, with

Cary Grant and Irene Dunne); 1938: *Holiday* (dir George Cukor, with Cary Grant, Katherine Hepburn); 1939: *Let Us Live* (dir John Brahm, with Maureen O'Sullivan and Henry Fonda), *Only Angels Have Wings* (dir Howard Hawks, with Cary Grant, Thomas Mitchell and Richard Barthelmess), *Golden Boy* (dir Rouben Mamoulian, with Barbara Stanwyck and Adolphe Menjou); 1940: *His Girl Friday* (dir Howard Hawks, with Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell), *The Howards of Virginia* (dir Frank Lloyd, with Cary Grant), *Angels Over Broadway* (dir Ben Hecht and Lee Garmes, with Douglas Fairbanks Jr), *Arizona* (dir Wesley Ruggles, with William Holden); 1941: *Penny Serenade* (dir George Stevens, with Cary Grant and Irene Dunne), *Texas* (dir George Marshall, with William Holden, Glenn Ford and Claire Trevor), *You Belong To Me* (dir Wesley Ruggles, with Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda), *The Men In Her Life* (dir Gregory Ratoff, with Loretta Young).

But despite this sprinkling of prestige productions the basic recipe remained much the same as before. There were lots of low-budget Westerns (a dozen or so in 1940) directed by Lambert Hillyer, a veteran of the Columbia lot, or Joseph H Lewis, and starring Bill Elliott or Charles Starrett. The studio made several series: a number of films based on Blondie, the cartoon character, the Lone Wolf series of thrillers, an Ellery Queen mystery series and so on. There were light comedies from Alexander Hall, more light comedies and musicals from Walter Lang, and plenty of crime films (a few titles at random from 1938: *Women In Prison*, *When G-Men Step In*, *Penitentiary*, *Highway Patrol*, *Reformatory*, *Convicted*, *I Am The Law*, *Juvenile Court*, *Smashing The Spy Ring*).

What is one to conclude from what emerges of Columbia's production policy in this period? Aware that a viewing of all the films might prove one wrong, it could be said that there is no evidence of Columbia's deliberately following a line favourable to the New Deal. Of course it could be objected that a similar scanning of the titles of Warner Brothers films of the same time would fail to reveal what an actual viewing of the films shows, a detectable if not pronounced leaning towards Rooseveltian attitudes. But this much seems likely: the policy of bringing in outside stars and directors (and writers too) for big-budget productions would have worked against the continuity required for a deliberate political policy. Whereas at Warners a nucleus of stars, writers, producers and directors was built up capable of producing pictures that fused the thrills of crime with social comment, at Columbia the occasional film (such as *A Man's Castle*, directed by Frank Borzage in 1933) which took the Depression as its subject was a one-off, with the exception of Capra. And it does seem as though Capra was an exception. As far as one can tell the directors who did not have his freedom at the studio did not follow him in the direction of social comment, and neither did directors brought in from outside

82 with a similar amount of freedom. And Capra's films, after all, despite his standing within the studio, are only a tiny proportion of all the films Columbia made in the 1930's.

If one can say that the presence of Giannini on the trust controlling Columbia did not lead to films predominantly favourable to the New Deal, then can one not also throw doubt on the assumption that control of a studio by interests favourable to the Republican Party led to films (such as *Young Mr Lincoln* and *King Kong*) designed to make propaganda for that party? No-one would argue that there was a total lack of correlation between ownership and the content of films. No studio in the 1930's would have tolerated outright Communist movies, or anything very close to that. (Nor for that matter would a Fascist film have stood any chance of being made.) But within these parameters considerable diversity was possible, a diversity, moreover, which it is dangerous to reduce by the simple expedient of labelling all the films as bourgeois. The difference in political attitudes between, say, *The Good Earth* (MGM, 1937) and *The Grapes Of Wrath* (20th Century-Fox, 1940) – two films with not totally dissimilar subjects – are not negligible and relate to real political and social events of the time. But they cannot be explained simply in terms of who owned the studios or in terms only of social attitudes at the time. Any explanation would require that a number of factors be taken into account, and not least of these would be the exact nature of the institutions which produced them.

The history of the American film industry, then, forms a kind of missing link in attempts, Marxist and otherwise, to make connections between films and society. As we have seen, many of the materials needed to forge that link are missing, which is why the title of this essay, 'Notes on Columbia Pictures Corporation 1926-41', is intended to imply more than the customary academic modesty. The problems of producing such a history are both practical and the result of a massive ideological prejudice, and I am aware that the information I have produced on Columbia in the 1930's amounts to very little in the way of real knowledge. But this information has been the result of a few hours in the library, not of a large-scale research programme. If one considers how much has been learned, for example, about British labour history in the nineteenth century the possibilities for further research do not seem hopeless. As a subject it would appear equally as unpromising as the history of the film industry. Apart from newspapers there are few written sources and the people involved are all dead. The history therefore has to a great extent to be reconstructed from the material objects which survive: buildings, institutional structures, the customs and practices of a people. But full-time academics and research students have been working in the field for years. The study of the history of the American film industry has scarcely begun.

## On the History and Ideology of Film Lighting

Peter Baxter

During the 1880's, the major theatres of Europe and America began to convert their stage lighting systems from the gas which had come into widespread use in the twenty or thirty previous years to electricity. It is true that arc lighting had been installed at the Paris Opera as early as 1846, but the superior efficiency of gas illumination at the time, and the surety of its supply, had brought it into prominent use during the third quarter of the century when it attained no small operational sophistication. From a single control board gas light could be selectively brightened or dimmed, even completely shut down and re-started. The theatrical term 'limelight' originally referred to a block of lime heated to incandescence by a jet of gas, which could throw a brilliant spot of light on the stage to pick out and follow principal actors. Henry Irving so much preferred gas to electric light that he used it for his productions at the Lyceum Theatre, and achieved spectacular results, into the twentieth century, when the rest of theatrical London had been electrified for some years.

But despite the mastery that a man like Irving could attain over gas lighting, for most stages it was

'strictly for visibility and to illuminate the scenery. The Victorians painted that scenery to incorporate *motivated* light meticulously. A window would be painted and the light coming through the window would be painted in. The visual technique was that stars and leading players performed on the apron, or in the downstage area. The upstage area was used to create locale. Stage sets were over-scale, almost operatic in scale, and within the huge, romantic scenery, dimly lit and carefully painted, the extras or crowds or courtiers would be assembled' (Jean Rosenthal and Lael Wertebaker: *The Magic of Light*, Boston 1972, p 53).

Gas lighting seems to have made no significant difference to

84 habits of set design fixed when the best illumination was a row of oil footlights. The painted interior or landscape remained the mainstay of theatrical staging; even at Bayreuth, Wagner's monumental works were performed before canvas painted in realist perspective.

With the widespread advent of electrical lighting, however, profound changes occurred in stagecraft, the results of which were assumptions about the function of lighting which continue to dominate theatrical and cinematic practice.

At first, no substantial changes occurred in the mounting of stage lighting; where gas lights had been, and oil lamps before gas, electric arcs or incandescent bulbs were installed: as footlights across the front of the stage and as border-lights at its sides. 'Spotlights – casting the pools of light which are the true beginning of modern lighting design – could be hung in relatively few and severely regimented places. The layout for scenery seldom reserved physical room for lighting equipment' (ibid, p 54).

However, there was one property which made an overwhelming difference between an electric light and a gas mantle in the same place; electric light was incomparably brighter, and in this brightness, a theatrical practice two hundred years old became suddenly inadequate. 'At the end of the century the great turn to electricity suddenly threw the obvious frauds of conventional scenic practices into focus. Two-dimensional [sic] settings, deprived of the soft lights and mysterious shadows of gas lighting, lost all semblance of reality in the garish glow of the incandescent bulbs' (A Nicholas Vardac: *Stage to Screen. Theatrical Method from Garrick to Griffith*, Cambridge, Mass 1949, p 9). A backdrop or costume that might have stood up under the 'softer, sweeter' gas lights (Sheldon Cheney: *Stage Decoration*, New York 1928, p 65) was shown to be a contrivance. *Ellen Terry's Memoirs* (New York 1969) tell us, 'Until electricity has been greatly improved and developed, it can never be to the stage what gas was. The thick softness of gaslight, with the lovely specks and motes in it, so like *natural* light, gave illusion to many a scene which is now revealed in all its naked trashiness by electricity' (p 134).

The white glare which came to characterise the stage between, say, 1896 when the Kliegl Brothers invented their famous arc lamp (see Robert Grau: *The Stage in the Twentieth Century*, New York 1969 – first ed 1912 – pp 102-4) and c 1915-1920, demanded that something else be added to the repertory of gesture that had been used in the lesser brilliance of oil and gas light:<sup>1</sup>

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1. The codification of gesture was of long standing and international in scope. See, for example, an adaptation of a German work – Henry Siddons: *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action Adapted to English Drama*, 2nd improved ed, London 1822, in which there are illustrations of the physical signification of such states as Indifference, Anger, Servility, even Vulgar Arrogance.

'Against the flat, unreal lighting of the old theatre the actors had to distort their faces with violent cosmetics. Stage properties and solid parts of the setting were made hard and lifeless by being equally illuminated in all parts. . . . Still more serious, the footlights reveal instantly the artificiality of any other light used (as, for instance, the front or side "spots"), and cross and conflict with it in a most disagreeable way' (Hiram Kelly Moderwell: *The Theatre of Today*, New York 1927, p 108).

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With the electric light, therefore, the conventions of stage realism were suddenly in very real danger of collapse. If the combination of flat background and living actors, both under the same light, became for a period of twenty years or so the norm of stage production, its evident contradiction was insupportable to certain sections of the theatrical intelligentsia. When the inevitable reaction came, it took two directions; one intended to re-establish stage realism under the new light, the other set out to abolish physical illusionism altogether, to replace representation by revelation.

Initially, the reaction was not wholly, perhaps not even primarily, a function of the wide adoption of electric lighting by the commercially most important theatres. Nevertheless, however much André Antoine was influenced by Zola's *Le Naturalisme au théâtre* (1881) when he founded the Théâtre Libre in 1887, it is certain that among the aspects of commercial theatre deplored by him and by the founders of the theatres that followed – the Freie Bühne (Berlin 1889), the Independent Theatre (London 1891), the Moscow Art Theatre (1898) – was the incongruity of treating an obviously three-dimensional actor before an obviously two-dimensional painting as a single 'reality'. And it was the electric light that made this incongruity obvious.

It is not possible here to explore the complex development in Europe and America of the 'Art Theatre' movement. In its earliest phase it propounded an extreme form of scenic naturalism which replaced the painted canvas with solidly constructed sets, and used props which were not props but the things themselves. It is the ultimate stage of this naturalism, when it had been assimilated and vulgarised by the commercial theatre, and taken to its furthest extreme, that is of importance to a consideration of film lighting. That stage was reached in the New York productions of David Belasco, who – under the influence also of Irving's lavishly detailed melodramas and Shakespearean extravaganzas – claimed to have once spent five thousand dollars and an entire summer trying to reproduce the effect of a particular sunset for *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905), then to have rejected it because although very beautiful, 'it was not even remotely Californian' (David Belasco: *The Theatre Through its Stage Door*, New York 1919, p 173).

The other phase of the general reaction also disclaimed the

86 illusion of painted set design, but intended to replace it not with the enhanced illusion of the naturalists, but with stylised sets within which lighting itself instituted a world different from the solid, three-dimensional one; the world of the inner life. It is convenient to adopt the usual course and trace the beginning of this lighting practice to the work of two men, Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) and Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966).

Appia himself was not able to set a stage until after the publication of his first theoretical texts, *La Mise en scène du drame wagnérien* (Paris 1895) and *Die Musik und die Inszenierung* (Munich 1899), after which he was involved in only six major productions between 1903 and 1924. Craig's influence likewise was far greater than would have been expected from the number of his practical demonstrations, which, although few, took place in strategically important theatre centres: London, Dublin, Munich, Berlin and Moscow. The publication of his theoretical work, starting in 1905 with *The Art of the Theatre*, and continuing with further books and the periodical he published from Florence, *The Mask* (1908-1929), gained Craig a reputation and a place of enormous importance in the history of the theatre. By mid-century, it could be written that 'between 1895 and 1905 the writings and the sketches of two men – the Swiss Adolphe Appia and the Englishman Edward Gordon Craig – and six English productions by Craig set the basis for a complete revolution in the designing and lighting of scenery' (Kenneth MacGowan: *The Living Stage, a History of World Theater*, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1955, p 434).

The Victorian stage, illuminated by gas or by electricity, in a practice that was clearly still dominant in Appia's and Craig's day, used lights according to conventions ('Comedies were bright; dramas were uncheerful. Day was yellow; night blue' – Rosenthal and Wertenbaker, op cit, p 55) which were more or less taken over by the naturalist theatre, and increasingly heavily exploited by entrepreneurs like David Belasco for the sake of exciting effects –

'Eventually came the scene of the red bamboo forest where the surrounded Samurai . . . commit honourable suicide by hara-kiri. Behind the gaunt trees I show a great, blood-red descending moon, symbolical of ebbing life. I shrouded this picture in deep shadows and painted it in the color tones of tragedy. . . . When the audience had heard the clatter of the armor as the last man fell, the moon had sunk out of sight, leaving the stage in darkness and silence' (Belasco, op cit, p 178)

– to the extent that Belasco could boast in 1901 that 'the characters present on the stage are really secondary to the lighting effects' (*New York World*, February 17, 1901, cit Vardas op cit, p 115). In a theatre which depended for its economic well-being on rousing in its patrons the pleasure of artificially experiencing a gamut of emotions within a few hours, Belasco used light, shadow,



and colour for the sake of their deeply instituted empathetic powers, in a practice which obviously stemmed from literary sources and long theatrical convention, however much he would ascribe them to nature: 'Romantic impulse springs from the half-lights, and thus the twilight, with its silvery blue, is the hour for lovers' trysts. Observe the effect of the yellow gleam of a lamp, shining from a window into the darkness, and note the feeling of half-fear that involuntarily steals over you. Yet courage comes in the clear white light of the noonday sun' (Belasco, *op cit*, p 166). Etcetera.

The Appian response to the problem that arose with electric lighting (and the response of Craig, to which it is conceptually allied) was a determination, not to reinvigorate the faltering illusionism of traditional stagecraft, but rather to replace it altogether. In place of the painted drop, or the fine detail of a naturalist setting, there would be a stage of planes and masses; instead of a lighting scheme limited to general illumination or aspiring only to intoxicating 'effects', light and shadow would produce a stage space that had a volume congruous with the living volume through which the play was expressed, the actor; unlike Belasco's ingenious electrical spectacles, the light designed on Appian principles was to be dramatic rather than empathetic, an extension in three dimensions of the actor's presence.

The key to Appia's conception of the highest use of stage lighting lies in fact in the specific relation of light to the face of the actor; footlights

'destroy the normal expression of the features, which must be expressed by some abstract sign. Great actors, in seeking to remedy this, devise ingenious make-up to suit their particular style of acting; the result is often remarkable, but what futile efforts, when a different principle of lighting – not active from the point of view of the overall decorative picture, but *based on facial expression* (which would naturally lead to a greater expressiveness of the whole body) – could have a hundred times more effect upon nuances of facial expression, bodily positions and movement, without overburdening the actor. But the audience would then complain that they could not "see" well enough, like children who cannot "see" an object unless they squeeze it in their hands' (Adolphe Appia: *Music and the Art of the Theatre*, Coral Gables Fla 1962, pp 87-8).

Appia and Craig not only gave expression to the urgent need for change which contemporary contradictions in stagecraft made imperative, they gave concrete directions to the way in which change would take place. After a performance of *Hamlet* by the Moscow Arts Theatre on a stage designed by Craig, the correspondent of *The Times* wrote, 'Mr Craig has the singular power of carrying the spiritual significance of words and dramatic situations beyond the

88 actor to the scene in which he moves . . . every line, every space of light and shadow going directly to heighten and amplify the significance of that action, and becoming thereby something more than its mere setting – a vital and component part no longer separable from the whole’ (cit Sheldon Cheney: *The Art Theatre*, New York 1925, p 203).

The stagecraft of Appia and Craig, which seemed to pierce the phenomenal limitations of naturalism and enable a theatrical production to reveal the Idea underlying a dramatic work, was taken up by Max Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater and Stanislavsky at the Moscow Arts Theatre, to cite only the most illustrious adherents to the new creed. So quickly did it become the motive force for a transformation in Western theatrical practice, that in 1914 it could be written:

‘ Lighting, which was formerly a mere necessary nuisance in dramatic production, has come to be one of the most important forces in the modern theatre. Its possibilities for making stage art supple and expressive are almost boundless. No other element of stage production will yield so much in return for a little care and artistic sense. No reason – except stupidity – remains for the ugly and lifeless illumination used on the American stage. Expert knowledge and trained artistic sense would, through lighting alone, produce a new birth of beauty in our theatre ’ (Moderwell, op cit, p 117).

And five years after this, the foremost representative of that American stage could testify to the encroachments that the new methods of stage craft were making on the ‘ naturalism ’ that he stubbornly defended:

‘ A school of decorators has grown up within the theatre which is trying to improve upon the effects of nature. Thus has risen the so-called “ new art ” of the stage. It has resulted in the eccentricities of coloring and lighting that in very recent years have been having a fitful vogue. My own belief is that it is not only a negation of truth, but a waste of time, to try to improve upon nature, because from it emerges the tawdry, the bizarre, and the unreal ’ (Belasco, op cit, p 167).

The change in stagecraft against which Belasco was perhaps the last producer of consequence to hold out was accomplished with lights and an electrical technology which did not exist when Appia’s first books were written, but which were necessary to the practical implementation of his theory. The last, and perhaps the most important of these developments occurred between 1910 and 1920: ‘ First, a method of making strong, ductile tungsten wire and, subsequently, a concentrated-filament projection service lamp using this wire ’ (Willard F Bellman: *Lighting the Stage, Art and Practice*, New York 1967, p 19). It was this wire that made possible

an incandescent spotlight which could be precisely focused. With it, unwieldy arc light equipment could be dispensed with by the stage, and the noiseless incandescent lamps would be pressed into service, in combination with panchromatic film, for the change-over to sound filming in the late 1920's. 89

It is most certainly not accidental that the period which saw the transformation of Western stagecraft, especially as exemplified in lighting practice, coincided with the rise of the film industry to a position of great economic importance, and the development of cinematic practices which are essentially those of the industry today.

Obviously the organic metaphor of an art that is born with a certain genetic disposition, fumbles its way through infancy, childhood, and adolescence, until it matures into its destined final form, is both misleading and invidious. Lumière and Méliès were not two antithetical potentialities struggling for control of the nascent art; their respective productions represent rather the result of contradictions within the cultural practice of the era; on the one hand an art that was naturalist and illusionist, and on the other an art that was anti-naturalist and non-illusionist. Zola, we may be sure, would have approved of *Sortie des usines Lumière*; it is less certain that he would have looked benignly upon *Le Voyage dans la lune*. When finally the cinema assumed the shape which seemed to suit it most naturally, it was not because it had grown into it, nor even perfected primitive equipment and techniques which had held it back; it was the effect of determinations from many sides: the cinema had become an industry rather than something of a handicraft; it was subject to mass distribution on national and international levels; and not least it was intimately and increasingly connected with stage practices – from which it drew its technology, its material, its personnel – which were at the time going through a process of radical reconstitution.

In *Art and Visual Perception* (London 1967), Rudolf Arnheim, distinguishing between 'object brightness' and 'illumination' states (p 297): 'An evenly lighted object shows no signs of receiving its brightness from somewhere else. Its luminosity, as I said before, appears as a property inherent in the thing itself. The same is true for a uniformly lighted room. It even seems justifiable to say that a theatre stage viewed from the darkened house does not necessarily give the impression of being illuminated. When the light is evenly distributed, the stage may appear as a very bright world, a large luminary.' Such a stage, we have seen, was the rule rather than the exception in the first years of extensive electric lighting, the very situation against which Appia and Craig were militating.

When the first narratives came to be filmed in America they appeared on the screen as large luminaries, bright, but lit from no apparent source. Of course these films, where they were not real

90 exteriors, were shot on sets open to the sky, on rooftops, or in the glass studios that were beginning to be built before the the trek to California. Over the open sets were stretched cloth awnings; in some at least of the glass studios the panes in the roof and walls were translucent, so that the light for shooting was diffused by the awnings or the glass, ensuring the elimination of shadows and a generally even illumination (see Austin C Lescarbourea: *Behind the Motion Picture Screen*, New York 1971 – first published 1919 – p 134). It is only with some scrutiny, for example, that one can detect shadows in the interior scenes of *The Great Train Robbery*, the painted sets of which as well as the evenly distributed light reflect its origins in contemporary stagecraft. If it is true that Porter's 'demonstration of a syntax for the one-reel melodrama . . . became the great screen pattern for about ten years, roughly from 1902 to 1912' (Vardac, op cit, p 236), then it is also true that lighting throughout this period, and beyond, tended to conform to the model of featureless illumination provided by the stage.

The advent of electricity to the cinema studio did not have the same radical effect as the introduction of arcs to the stage. Practical electric lighting, to mitigate the interruptions caused by clouds, rain, the short daylight of winter, seems to have come into use in America around 1906 (see Joseph H North: *The Early Development of the Motion Picture, 1887-1909*, New York, 1973, p 107; and Vardac, op cit, p 166). Fred J Balshofer, cameraman with the Lubin Company of Philadelphia, recalls that when that company built a studio in 1905,

'It had a conventional slanting roof of glass that gave us the only source of light for photography. Consequently, the small interiors had to be photographed during the sunny hours of the day which were rare in the stormy winter months. Interiors were avoided as much as possible. In the summer of 1907, Lubin went all out and established a new and modern studio equipped with Cooper-Hewitt lighting' (Fred J Balshofer and Arthur C Miller: *One Reel a Week*, Berkeley, Cal. 1967, p 6).

Pathé's 1910 studio, noted for being up to the minute, was equipped with arc lights, the ubiquitous Cooper-Hewitts, and glass walls and roof, diffused with muslin curtains; these various sources of light would be mixed to create the desired overall shadowless illumination (ibid, p 94).

Two sources of artificial illumination seem to have been standard until the early 1920's. The arc lights of the Kliegl Brothers were adapted from the stage; these were employed for their blue-white illumination in batteries above, at the sides, and in front of the set. 'The pioneer producers troubled themselves very little with the arrangement of the lamps, for their only concern was whether there was sufficient illumination to produce a properly exposed negative' (Lescarbourea, op cit, p 136). The heat and ultra-violet rays

of the arcs annoyed, even injured, the actors, but more important so far as the studios were concerned, their flicker, if they were fed by alternating current, interfered with the consistent exposure of the film,<sup>2</sup> so that the Cooper-Hewitt mercury vapour lamps were the most favoured sources of light. 'It is a fact that the mercury-vapor gives out a light that is especially rich in blues, ultra-violet [1] and other colors rich in actinic properties, while it is remarkably free from those colors approaching the red end of the spectrum, which are very poor photographic rays [for orthochromatic film]. All in all, then, the Cooper-Hewitt light of a given strength contains the maximum actinic or real photographic value' (ibid, pp 136-8). The Cooper-Hewitts were tubes arranged in rectangular frames; like the arcs these were usually suspended above the set, and shed an even glow all around it.

Whether daylight, diffused by glass or muslin, or a mixture of daylight, Kliegs, and Cooper-Hewitts, the illumination in the cinema in the first decade or so of the century shared one thing with the light of the popular stage; its flat brilliance tended to wash away the facial features of the actors. 'There was no such thing as modeling' (Balshofer and Miller, op cit, p 47); compensation was attained by the same means that had come to the aid of the stage actor: the best filmic example of the 'violent' make-up with which the actors signified their intentions upon their faces is perhaps in a British film of 1905 by Walter Hagggar, *The Life of Charles Peace*, where a blatantly painted white face distinguishes the notorious outlaw from the assorted petty crooks, victims, and police of the adventure.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Karl Brown describes how this problem was overcome at Griffith's studio in 1915: 'We all crowded eagerly into the projection room to see the first tests of these new lights. They were beautiful, very beautiful, except for one thing: the picture flickered abominably. . . . We were using alternating current, the alternations were out of step with the shutter, and there was nothing to be done about it except to install a motor-generator unit that would deliver direct current to the lights, which would then be steady, and all would be well. . . . So heavy concrete foundations were formed, a huge AC motor was married to a DC generator, the juice was turned on, and the song of the motor-generator set was heard in the land, never to be silent as long as a company was shooting inside' (*Adventures with D W Griffith*, New York 1973, pp 99-100).
  3. See the still in C W Ceram: *Archæology of the Cinema*, London 1965, Plate 268; also Rachel Low and Roger Manvell: *The History of the British Film 1896-1906*, London 1948, Plate 31. It was not only from his fellow actors that a player had often to be emphatically distinguished, as Cedric Gibbons, once Art Director for MGM, made clear in a 1942 *Encyclopædia Britannica* article: 'All architectural details, including fireplaces, furniture, and pictures were painted on these "flats"'. Then came a craze for wall-paper, and whenever a high class set was required, wall-paper was used to express it. The larger the design and the more contrasting the values,

92 What seems essential to an understanding of lighting in this phase of film-making, however, is that the absence of subtle shading was not by and large considered a defect or a lack. If chiaroscuro had been ardently desired, despite the primitiveness which we now see as a fate against which they struggled, film-makers would have found ways to accomplish what they wanted. As early as 1905 for example, Porter made a film called *The Seven Ages*, in which he obtained a splendid fireside effect by means of 'a mirror that reflected the sun from a tray of water in the fireplace scenes. The result was a very definite photographic innovation' (Kemp R Niver: *The First Twenty Years, A Segment of Film History*, Los Angeles 1968, p 87). The fame of the lighting effects achieved by Griffith and Bitzer in 1909, in *Edgar Allen Poe*, *Pippa Passes*, and *A Drunkard's Reformation* (and the less often cited *Fools of Fate*),<sup>4</sup> perhaps only obscures the fact that these were memorable not merely because they were the first, but because they seem to have been nearly unique instances of such lighting before 1914, and the fact that rather than taking the film a step away from theatricality, these 'effects' were of a piece with the kinds of things that the theatre of David Belasco had been accomplishing in reaction against flat stage lighting: in other words, the cinema was moving in the same direction as commercial American theatre, and a few paces behind it.

In *Pippa Passes* Griffith failed to convince Bitzer of the practicability of something he wanted to try, and had to turn instead to the second cameraman at Biograph, Arthur Mervin, and tell him that he

'figured on cutting a little rectangular place in the back wall of Pippa's room, about three feet by one, and arranging a sliding board to fit the aperture much like the cover of a box sliding in and out of grooves. The board was to be gradually lowered and beams from a powerful Klieg shining through would thus appear as the first rays of the rising sun striking the wall of the room. Other lights stationed outside Pippa's window would give the effect of soft morning light. The lights full up, the mercury tubes a-sizzling, the room fully lighted, the back wall should have become a regular back wall again, with no little hole in it.'<sup>5</sup>

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the better the paper was thought to be. Before this conglomerate mass of pattern, the actor was in vigorous competition for the attention of his audience – and many times he lost' (v XV, p 859).

4. See Niver, op cit, pp 127-8. Of *Pippa Passes*, the *Biograph Bulletin* n 280 comments: 'In this picture the Biograph presents a most artistic subject handled in a manner never before excelled, with keen appreciation of its poetic and dramatic value; photographically perfect, and comprising many novel effects never before attempted' (*Biograph Bulletin* 1908-1912, intro by Eileen Bowser, New York 1973).
5. Linda A Griffith: *When the Movies Were Young*, New York 1968 –

In his *D W Griffith* (New York 1972), Robert Henderson notes that Griffith had asked for such effects in the two plays he had written, and the introduction of them into screen narrative was obviously determined by contemporary theatrical practice. 93

In fact the quality of the work of Porter and Griffith was such that their endeavours were praised in terms that convey their precise affinities. In *The Stage in the Twentieth Century* (1912), Robert Grau passes judgment on a film by Porter of the year before, *Called Back*: 'The recital of this gripping rural tale, portrayed by only three of Rex's [The Rex Film Company] players, was of a character one is wont to look to a Belasco for, and it is doubtful if that wizard of stagecraft himself could have added to the verity or created with better effect the illusion here sought and achieved' (op cit, p 257). And of a film of the same year from the American Biograph Company: *Under Burning Skies*, though only three unrecognised players were cast in it, was unquestionably the very last word in simulating reality. Who the producer was, I don't know, but Mr Belasco could not have emphasised the verity of the gripping recital' (ibid, p 304). The unknown 'producer' was of course D W Griffith (to whose 'genius in the perfection of the Motion Picture Art' Grau would dedicate *The Theatre of Science* only two years later). It is not on the similarity of lighting between these films and Belasco's plays that the comparisons turn, but the erection of Belasco's stagecraft as the standard of realism is significant of the forces that were determining the direction of the development of the cinema.

On the whole, however, it would appear that during these years, as the cinema was almost imperceptibly bent toward this conventionalised naturalism, it was the literally in-significant lighting of most contemporary stagecraft that predominated. In the few years after 1906, 'Set construction was still two-dimensional and extremely simple. Scene painters and designers, gradually recruited from the theatre, used sets consisting mainly of "flats" much like those of the stage' (Vardac, op cit, p 194). It is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that the recruits to the film industry were not for the most part coming from the more successful theatres, the ones that could adopt the *mise-en-scène* at which Belasco excelled, but from the many companies which, burdened with small, unmodifiable theatres, limited publics, or whatever other fatal deficiencies, were beginning to close down their buildings and re-open them as film houses: painted sets behind electric footlights could not compete with extravagant naturalism and cheap films.

'Progress in the field of the silent drama has been on an unparalleled scale; in fact, some of the developments of the last

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first ed 1925 - p 128. See stills opposite p 118, and similar anecdote in Lewis Jacobs: *The Rise of the American Film*, New York 1939, p 104.

94 few months have caused the most important metropolitan managers and producers to look on in utter amazement. As recently as two years ago [ie 1910] these gentlemen were inclined to regard the moving picture as a temporary fad, but when such offerings came as the Kinemacolor Coronation festivities, and they noted that the public willingly paid regular theatre prices to see the wondrous spectacle on view, they looked askance at each other. . . . The number of theatrical producers is now the smallest in twenty-five years, while the moving picture magnates are increasing in number yearly' (Grau, *op cit*, pp 63 and 69).

What really sent shivers down the spines of the theatre owners was the appearance before the camera of the great star; when the star was Sarah Bernhardt, the shiver became a palsy. The films in which the Divine Sarah shone were of course the products of the Film d'Art company; they have the distinction of still serving as stock examples of the theatrical misuse of the film camera by people who do not appreciate its true propensities; see for example this comment by Stanley J Solomon:

'The Film d'Art is of interest in that its pretentious name signified one of the earliest attempts to elevate film by turning it into a form of literature. This attempt was misdirected, despite its good intentions, for by relying on famous theater performers and famous literary sources (such as Ibsen and Shakespeare), it did little to improve the development of a true cinematic style' (*The Film Idea*, New York 1972, p 166).

In 1933, only twenty years after *Queen Elizabeth*, Raymond Spottiswoode complained

'the camera became subservient to the stage, a means of reproduction; even if hampered by defects. There was no attempt at expression through the camera, which was fixed at eye level in the middle of the set, and afterwards held perfectly still. The characters recited their parts, but exaggerated their gestures' [cf Kracauer: *Theory of Film*, New York 1960, p 217: 'the actors play their parts with a sense of detailed characterisation and a minimum of gestures, thus breaking away from stage conventions'] 'in order to produce some effect upon this inconveniently deaf machine. To watch Sarah Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth* or *La Dame aux Camellias* (the only living form in which she can be seen) is painful and pathetic. But though the considerable differences between actor and camera, combined with the poor lighting and definition then obtainable, made the greatest appear grotesque, this unhealthy tradition persisted until the early years of the war.'<sup>6</sup>

6. *A Grammar of Film*, Berkeley 1950 – first ed 1933 – pp 57-8. See the still of Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth* in Benjamin B Hampton: *A History of the Movies*, New York 1931, Plate 26.



Extravagance of gesture is a relative thing, and it is not unlikely that what the English Spottiswoode saw as exaggeration, the French Sadoul (from whom Kracauer got his information) saw as restraint. In any case it was an assumption framed in a context almost completely different from that in which the films were produced which led to the statement that such gestures as there were were meant for the unhearing camera. In fact there was a considerable audience more than accustomed to such a mode of acting, which would simply not have understood a 'natural' style, would not have seen it. Thus, in any of the stills we have from *Queen Elizabeth*, the whole arrangements of actors within the frame, the posture and spread arms of Bernhardt, signify the importance of an actress and an action which could be defined in no other way. It was not, as Spottiswoode said, that the lighting was poor; it is entirely adequate to the only task given it: the general illumination of the cast and set, the production of a 'large luminary'. Other systems, theatrical it is true, and already being superseded within the theatre, signified the 'meaning' of the scene (not the least signifier is Bernhardt's makeup, hardly less distinctive than that of whoever had played Charles Peace).

In fact, despite the 'advancements' made by Porter and Griffith in lighting a scene for effects of one kind or another, Rudolf Arnheim is probably right when he maintains in *Film As Art*: 'In the early days any conspicuous light effect was avoided, just as perspective size alterations and overlapping were shunned. If the effects of the lighting sprang to the eye too obviously in the picture, it was considered a professional error' (Berkeley 1971, p 72). This situation was to undergo radical change as cinema followed the stage in adapting to ever more stringent criteria of naturalism in the use of lighting effects. Pressure towards naturalism was combined with something less well documented: the influence of Appia and Craig on the theatrical lighting of even the naturalist school. As we have seen, their work was being polemically taken up by 1914, and by 1919 had become a positive nuisance in the eyes of David Belasco. In these years the practice of cinema lighting was to be altered so greatly that what went before could hardly be viewed from the 1920's as anything but an immature failure to grasp the medium's inherent possibilities.

The gradual desertion of the East and infiltration of California by the film industry probably curtailed the development of a significant lighting practice in the cinema. Griffith went West for the first time in January 1910, after the lighting experiments of 1909, which do not seem to have inspired any similar efforts documented in the next few years. The dependable sun of southern California meant more efficiency in scheduling production, and also that sets could once again be economically constructed in the open air; rain was a factor to be considered only in the winter, and even then it usually fell at night (see Balshofer and Miller, *op cit*, pp 143-4). A

96 stage was merely a large platform on which sets could be rigged. As in the East however, the direct sun was prevented from casting heavy shadows; reflectors were used as fill light, and the stages were strung with diffusers which could be moved as needed. On the largest stage at Universal's Hollywood studio, Grau says there were twenty-four thousand square feet of diffusers in 1914, but he mentions no electric lights (*The Theatre of Science*, New York 1969 – first ed 1914 – p 53). So the practice of flat lighting persisted in California as it had arisen in New York, New Jersey, and the other, less climatically pleasant Eastern states. But things were changing. In the East, at least, where the use of lights was by then common, Arthur Miller implies that in 1914 'Back lighting was beginning to be used more and more in lighting interiors, and the 60 amp spot, made by the Kliegl Light Company, became an integral part of the lighting equipment for those cameramen who kept abreast of the rapid advancements being made in the quality of photography' (Balshofer and Miller, op cit, p 122). Lighting was beginning to take over the function of separating major characters from their context, previously the function of makeup, gesture, and position. What we understand as the growing naturalism of the cinema, as well as of the stage, was the suppression of one constellation of conventions which technological changes had more or less suddenly made visible, and the imposition of another, made possible by the new technology.

1915 is by all accounts the key year in the electrification of the California studios. Clifford Howard, a scenarist, says that when he arrived at the Santa Barbara studio of the American Film Company, 'Instead of the single stage to which I had been accustomed at the Balboa studio, I here found five or six stages, one of them enclosed and using the Klieg lights which had recently come into use' ('The Cinema in Retrospect,' Pt II, *Close-Up* v III n 6, December 1928, p 37). What gave great immediate impetus to the acquisition of artificial lighting equipment, and the provision of at least one stage where it could be effectively used, seems to have been the enormous success enjoyed that year by several films directed by Cecil B DeMille, photographed by Alvin Wyckoff, and designed by Wilfred Buckland.

DeMille came of a theatrical family that had been closely associated with David Belasco; he himself had acted for Belasco (in *The Warrens of Virginia*, 1907; written by William DeMille – see Vardac, op cit, p 120) as well as written for him (*The Return of Peter Grimm*, 1911 – see Charles Higham: *Cecil B DeMille*, New York 1973, pp 14-5). He was joined in 1914 by Wilfred Buckland, who had been one of Belasco's set designers (and who would go on afterwards to such work as the castle in Fairbanks' *Robin Hood*, and the minutely naturalistic stage and screen sets of *Dead End*). When he went to work for DeMille, it was his task to design 'genuine sets instead of the painted, flat scenery usual at the time'

(Lewis Jacobs, cit Vardac, op cit, p 222). The problem was to light 97 them for the effects that DeMille and Buckland were used to on the stage of Belasco's theatre, and which would show them to great advantage. DeMille 'took the first step in *The Warrens of Virginia* (1915) by using black velvet hangings to exclude the California sun from night-time scenes, and reflectors to control its direction. Soon DeMille and Buckland were using arc lights' (Kenneth MacGowan: *Behind the Screen. The History and Techniques of the Motion Picture*, New York 1965, p 168). Higham makes it evident that Alvin Wyckoff was responsible for the quality of the light that was illuminating Buckland's sets: between the three of them they created images which were not in themselves luminaries, but which were lighted to produce the kind of significant, emotionally reactive effects that we have seen defined by David Belasco. As an early review puts it: 'Light becomes atmosphere instead of illumination: coming naturally from some window, lamp, or doorway, it illumines the centre of the picture and the people standing there with a glow that in intensity, in volume, or in variety of sources has some quality expressive of the emotion of the scene' (cit in MacGowan: *Behind the Screen*, op cit, p 169). The model of lighting in the American cinema lies in the practice adopted by DeMille, Buckland, and Wyckoff, the use of which entailed acquiescence to the contradiction of a light that, in the words of the reviewer, is both 'natural' and 'expressive'.

In 1915 Klieg lights were the only means of providing the precision required by the new kind of lighting. Fred Balshofer recalls an experiment using blue tinted incandescent lamps for general illumination in May 1915, which failed because of the tremendous heat thrown by the lamps (Balshofer and Miller, op cit, p 116). The arc lights were by no means comfortable for actors to work under, and presented other hazards as well. Geraldine Farrar, who starred in DeMille's *Carmen* (1915), points out:

'The worst part was the dreadful white make-up. It was terribly hot, and the Klieg lights made it worse. In no time at all the make-up was streaming down your face, and back you had to go to make it all up again. You kept getting Klieg eyes – an inflammation caused by arc-light dust – and you spent most of your time trooping down to the infirmary. The Kliegs were a great nuisance. You'd make the most inspired gesture, the arc would sputter, the light on your face would flicker, and the shot would be ruined' (Kevin Brownlow: *The Parade's Gone By*, New York 1969, p 33).

The flicker of the lights was eventually resolved, but it was probably with good reason that the first roofed studio built by the Lasky company was covered with glass (MacGowan: *Behind the Screen*, op cit, p 168), for mixed lighting, if not strict sunlight, must have remained common for some time past 1915. In *One Reel a Week*,

98 there are several stills from *At Bay*, shot by Arthur Miller, directed by George Fitzmaurice in 1915 at Pathé's eastern studio; although the stills show splendid natural and dramatic effects, the filmmakers were evidently not yet at ease with the new techniques: 'It was a five- or six-reel feature, and the interiors were photographed with mixed Cooper-Hewitt, arc and daylight, and it often took considerable time to achieve the desired lighting' (p 125).

Despite the difficulties, the studios were in that year beginning to acquire extensive resources for shooting under lights. 'Eighty amp spotlights appeared on the scene and their use brought about a noticeable increase in light effect photography. Flat lighting gave way to modelling with highlight and shadow, and at this point I believe cinematography began its development toward finally being recognised as one of the arts' (ibid, pp 126-7). That is, it began to conform to patterns which the theatre was in the process of laying down, and which in themselves were closely related to figurative painting. The art directors who were coming to the studios demonstrate this relationship. The set designer for the Babylon sequence of *Intolerance*, Walter L Hall, seems to have been a kind of neurotic genius who 'talked so interminably to everybody about perspective, perspective, perspective that everyone called him "Spec" Hall' (Brown: op cit, p 150); for *Hearts of the World*, the designer, Charles Baker, preferred to work in water colours: one of his designs was 'the interior of a French farmhouse, complete to the finest detail. Not a matter of walls and doors and windows but a completely furnished set with chairs and tables and even flowers in the big bow window upstage. He had not only designed and drawn the set but he had dressed it, down to the texture of the floors and the ageing of the worn furniture' (ibid, p 190). This set was erected on the central platform of the Babylon set from *Intolerance*, and shot under natural light, something that by 1917 was becoming an anomaly; but the designer had countered the lack of sophisticated illumination by using his paint to reproduce the effect that light would have given: 'The set had not only been designed, it had been *lighted*. Shaded corners were painted darker than the open areas that caught the light from the big upstage window. The further from the window, the darker the walls' (ibid, p 191).

In the East as well, techniques of the figurative arts were beginning to determine the look of the film image. Arthur Miller:

'Fitzmaurice had hired Anton Grot as his art director. Grot was the first art director that I had the opportunity of working with who hadn't come up through the ranks from the construction department. Anton Grot was a gifted and talented artist who made beautiful charcoal drawings, approximately 11in x 14in, of the set before it was constructed. All his compositions showed a full shot of each set, with all the delicate tones and shadings that

suggested ideas for lighting and, in general, were of great help to me as cameraman. This new experience gave me an opportunity to consult and suggest breaks in the set to make it convenient for lighting and, in a practical sense, afforded me the opportunity to continue studying composition, with instructions from Anton' (Balshofer and Miller, op cit, p 130).

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In California, where obtaining natural light was no problem, the acquisition of electrical lights was not mainly a matter of increased production freedom. In one sense, it contributed to the abuse of labour upon which the enormous profits of the studios were built; the coming of yellow afternoon light or of dusk was no longer necessarily the end of the working day. In an artistic sense lights were necessary to the then beginning fetishisation of the actor and of the actor's face. Geraldine Farrar, whose career in the opera made her presence on the screen of obvious value to her employers, says, 'I thought DeMille was a genius, and I was very fond of him. He would never shoot you in close-up against white, and he would never allow a moving background behind a close-up. He wanted all the attention focussed on the expressive moment' (Brownlow, op cit, p 418).

The project of natural expressiveness in the cinema was developing in accord with the theoretical exposition of Adolphe Appia, based on a concept of the face as the outward sign of inward meaning. The profits from *The Birth of a Nation* provided Griffith's studio with the wherewithal to acquire every modern resource, and the impression left by Karl Brown's exuberant prose is that the equipment was used precisely to increase the fascination that could be aroused by the human face. 'We were all as eager to try our splendid new lights as youngsters with new toys. They were really wonderful. There was nothing that couldn't be done with them. Back lighting was a cinch. You could hit a profile with a 100-amp spot and get a line light that would knock your eye out, as the saying went. You could also burn one into the back of a frizzy-headed blonde and make her look like a haystack afire' (Brown, op cit, p 99).

Appia's influence was perhaps even more marked in Europe, certainly more direct. By 1914 footlights had been abandoned by virtually all the most advanced theatres, such as Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater in Berlin. The brilliant glare of this low frontal illumination, which would not admit of modelling, had given way to the use of the Fortuny or Linnebach systems with arc lamps positioned above the stage and directed down and towards the house, reflecting their light onto the stage off coloured silks or through coloured filters; these therefore illuminated the stage or any part of the stage indirectly and from above. The addition of spotlights in the wings permitted the creation of what Appia called 'living light', the lights that turned mere visibility into revela-

100 tion; for in throwing light on what it was important to see, it could simultaneously shade what should not be seen. The use of such lights was among the singular features of the stagecraft of Max Reinhardt, and from his theatres, the influence of which on German theatrical practice seems to have been all-pervading, Appian lighting inevitably found its way into the German cinema.

According to MacGowan, 'Under the leadership of Reinhardt, the German theatre had learned how to build and light scenery in the ways of the new stagecraft. Its settings created both beauty and illusion out of fine design, whose simplicity often suggested off-stage grandeur. Lubitsch expanded such settings until they filled the screen with convincing magnificence, and he discovered how he could adapt stage lighting to make motion picture photography more effective' (MacGowan, *Behind the Screen*, op cit, pp 220-221). The Lubitsch touch was the small detail, the change in facial expression, which the new lighting made a practicable signifier.

In New York, the Belasco Theater seems to have been remodelled in the summer of 1915, and a light bridge installed over the proscenium: small arcs from here lighted the stage in conjunction with others on either vertical of the arch, thus at least doing away with the low angle of footlight glare. 'Of late,' wrote Belasco in 1919, 'there has been a good deal of discussion concerning the more natural effects to be gained by the omission of footlights, which almost invariably cast unnatural shadows upon the scenery and the faces of the actors. To do away with footlights has even been heralded as a new and important innovation in the art of the stage director' (op cit, pp 170-1). He then goes to some trouble to list the plays over the previous thirty-five years for which he had turned down or off the footlights, where it was 'justified'.

By 1918 artificial lighting equipment for the cinema was becoming more complex, and the studios even in California were moving more and more completely indoors. Arthur Miller states that a stage on which he worked at Universal 'was equipped with twin broadside arc floor lamps, top light arc scoops, several 80 amp spots, and Cooper-Hewitt floor banks used for filler light. Mixing of daylight for photographing interiors was becoming a thing of the past, and the glass panes in several studios that had been built to use daylight were now painted black' (Balshofer and Miller, op cit, p 143).

The conventions of lighting which were to dominate Hollywood production up to the present day had more or less been arrived at by 1918; there were important technical advances still to be made, but the dominant ideology behind lighting would remain that of revelation and expression. A film like *The Blue Bird* by Maurice Tourneur in 1918 only demonstrates how assumptions of the look required of a film had by then solidified:

'A number of scenes,' said Kenneth MacGowan, 'showed the

players against backdrops painted in fantastic flat designs – with perhaps a mountain or a castle in silhouette. There was no attempt to light these drops so as to imitate reality or to create an abstraction of vague dreaminess. . . . The effect of individual scenes was pretty enough, but the contrast between these and succeeding scenes of three-dimensional realism was disconcerting' (Brownlow, *op cit*, pp 274-6).

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The Moscow Art Theatre had in fact mounted a production of *The Blue Bird* in exactly the same fashion, a series of frankly painted drops of a highly imaginative sort interspersed among realistic scenes, and we are assured by an advocate of the new stagecraft that for such works of fantasy, settings 'may legitimately be painted, for here a certain noticeable artificiality is not out of place' (Cheney: *The Art Theater*, *op cit*, p 196). But it was becoming a cornerstone of the edifice of cinematography that the audience must under no conditions be disconcerted.

By 1918, 'the modern era of picture making had arrived, and gone were the good old days of the pioneer and the trail blazer and the cinema prophet.' Howard was only partially right in this statement (*op cit*, p 41), for rather than the absolute originality that he was ascribing to the first American film-makers, they had led the cinema, and not only lighting in the cinema, in a path of naturalism and illusionism that the theatre was re-defining under the pressures of its own internal contradictions. The first clause of the sentence is fact; the second is part of the mythology of the cinema which stands in for its history.

There is a story of C B DeMille, one version of which is quoted by Arnheim (*Film as Art*, *op cit*, pp 72-3), another told by Jesse Lasky in his autobiography (see MacGowan: *Behind the Screen*, *op cit*, pp 168-9), the point of which is that, having thrown his superiors into consternation by the use of heavy shadows in a film of 1915 (perhaps *The Warrens of Virginia*), DeMille placated them by saying that what was objected to was 'Rembrandt chiaroscuro', a distinction for which the film's rental fees could reasonably be raised. The complaint addressed to DeMille accords remarkably with Appia's prediction of what would occur as the first reaction to his system of lighting, and demonstrates the effect of a sudden change of convention. Sudden, that is, for Goldwyn in the head office, not for DeMille, who had learned these effects on Belasco's stage. Where Goldwyn had been used to seeing people on the screen, he suddenly saw a picture, an image composed of light and shade. There was a new representational code to be learned before the signifier could be ignored in favour of the signified. The inventor of the code, and the guarantor of its correctness, was for the film industry a painter who had died in poverty two hundred and fifty years before.

'The Dutch painters . . . knew all about light' (Frederick

102 Bentham: *The Art of Stage Lighting*, London 1968, p 263). Since not long after the publication of his works, Appia's theory of lighting has been visualised in terms of the use of light characteristic of 17th-century painting in Holland and Flanders. Appia had a religious idea of artistic power, and in his discussion of painting on the stage, that is, the painting of backdrops and scenery, his writing is at once most mystical and most dogmatic: 'The fictive and uniform nature of his art allows the painter a direct and personal control over his craft and tools. On the other hand, this particular method would spell disaster for the organic life of the dramatist's work' (op cit, p 80). In other words, if the dramatic production is to achieve the *conditio sine qua non* of a work of art, organic unity, it cannot admit the independent visions of two creative minds. Therefore stage decoration is dependent on the vision of the dramatist. Moreover, the static colours of the painting are replaced by the mobility of living light: 'The word-tone poet paints his picture with light' (ibid, p 81). Since it was the Dutch painters who were being re-discovered in the 19th century<sup>7</sup> by another bourgeoisie, and the intensity of their concern with light was evident, it followed that their work should be the model for the new stagecraft.

Of course, Appia's theory was not produced *ex nihilo*. As early as 1775 'an Italian inveighed against the flat illumination of the stage, and asked for highlights and shadows like the effects "so much admired in the prints of Rembrandt"' (MacGowan: *The Living Stage*, op cit, p 434). When employed on the stage, the technical means being perfected at the end of the 19th century created contradictions which could be resolved by the application of tendencies in taste fostered by commercial-industrial Europe and translated into theatrical terms by Appia. These tendencies can be summed in the words of Roland Barthes: 'Bourgeois ideology continuously transforms the products of history into essential types' (*Mythologies*, London 1972, p 155). Or, in the words of Adolphe Appia: 'By its very presence, light expresses the "inner essence" of all vision, because, even at the moment of perception, it exhausts any further ideas we might have of it' (Appia, op cit, p 78).

As part of the ideological production of dominant cinema, light, which was technically necessary for sheer perception, was to be 'naturalised' in accordance with the example of Dutch art, that is, given source and direction. And as it fell fortuitously on the actors and on sets painstakingly designed to signify a particular age, a particular place, the light threw history into the shade and revealed those essences that were the common property of Man.

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7. This is a point made by Seymour Slive in 'Realism and Symbolism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting,' *Dadalus*, Summer 1962, pp 469-500. Josef von Sternberg draws attention to this article on p 319 of *Fun in a Chinese Laundry*, London 1966.



A film by Ernst Lubitsch is thus more properly titled *Passion* than *Madame DuBarry*; the latter was not the 'subject' of the film but the vehicle, a brief life incarnating something that burns in us all, rich or poor, now or then. The light that falls into the image, or that glows from within it, fulfils the same function in a painting by Rembrandt as in a film lighted and photographed by Daniels or Garmes. 'Rembrandt's pictures illustrate and use the twofold effect of light on the objects struck by it. The objects are seen as passively receiving the impact from an outer force, but at the same time they become light sources themselves, actively irradiating energy. Having become enlightened, they hand on the message' (Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, op cit, pp 314-5).

So the face of the American film actor became the locus of this radiant sign, which signified a presence no longer divine (save in cases such as *The Song of Bernadette*, where religious sentiment was deliberately exploited: see below, pp 103-4) but of a different spiritual order, the transcendent power of Great Love for example, as in William Daniels' lighting for Clarence Brown's *The Flesh and the Devil* (1927): 'For the arbour love scene I just wanted a faint glow to illuminate Garbo and Gilbert's faces. So I gave Jack Gilbert two tiny little pencil carbons to hold. When they kissed the carbons lit up. His hands shielded the mechanism from the lens' (Charles Higham: *Hollywood Cameramen*, Bloomington Indiana 1970, p 57; see the still in Brownlow, op cit, p 168). The device of the hidden light-source was used by Daniels just as it had been used by Rembrandt in the *Holy Family* painting described by Arnheim on p 314 of *Art and Visual Perception*, and ultimately for the same ends.

The distinction of the star is the distinction of the hero or the saint; the aura which surrounds the exceptional being becomes in the cinema as in portraiture an actual aura, a special emanation that marks the vibrancy of the heroic-stellar space. Thus William Daniels recounts from his work for the arch-realist Stroheim on *Foolish Wives*. 'I experimented with some halo-like effects round hair in that picture. I used a thin net like a lady's stocking over the lens. The effect was of a sort of vignette. You could burn it out with a cigarette into different shapes. There was one scene in which we had a monk in a cabin by candlelight; the candlelight made a little cross light, and von Stroheim liked that' (*Hollywood Cameramen*, op cit, p 62).

Arthur Miller deliberately adopted the convention of hagio-portraiture, 'naturalising' it for *The Song of Bernadette*:

'At the beginning of the picture, in Bernadette's home, when she first comes in, and stands there for a minute, you see a little glow on the wall, hardly noticeable, just like you would use to make the head stand away from an object behind it, but more intensified. I had this spotlight glow to the very end of the picture. And here

104 is a perfect example of how little directors control things like this. When we looked at three cut reels Henry King said, "Do you notice something?" And I said, "What?" And he said, "Every time she appears there's something glowing at the back of her head." I don't know whether he thought this was something spiritual that had crept into the picture from heaven! ' (ibid, p 149).

Whatever King thought, there is little doubt of the significance which it was supposed to have for the audience.

It is through the signification of such themes that dominant cinema charges its narratives with a profundity which fascinates the audience; the trivial anecdote becomes a human drama, the individual travails of the characters are heavy with universal implications, in their posing and gesturing there is a Meaning for us all, and moreover a Meaning that is not imposed by a moralist, but which beats in the very atmosphere through which the players walk. As *The Times* said of that performance of Craig's *Hamlet*, 'every line, every space of light and shadow goes directly to heighten and amplify the significance of that action.'

The American cinematographer practices as if in considered agreement with the ideals of harmony, of the subordination of light to a primary dramatic inspiration, promulgated by Appia and Craig.<sup>8</sup> At a basic level, certainly, this means no more than the reproduction for the screen of the most obvious conventions of 19th century theatre – 'Comedies were bright; dramas were uncheerful. Day was yellow; night blue'. Victor Milner, who along with John Seitz and Lee Garmes was one of the first exponents during the 1920's of that 'North light', that was so frankly related to Rembrandt's painting, wrote in 1930, in an article entitled 'Painting With Light':

'In a well-photographed picture the lighting should match the dramatic tone of the story. If the picture is a heavy drama . . . the lighting should be predominantly sombre. If the picture is a melodrama . . . the lighting should remain in a low key, but be full of strong contrasts. If the picture is, on the other hand, a light comedy . . . the lighting should be in a high key throughout, for two reasons: first, to match the action, and, secondly, so that no portion of the comedy action will go unperceived' (Victor

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8. Craig liked to pose his theories in the form of dialogues. Here the work of the 'stage-manager', which Craig conceived of as high art, is discussed: 'PLAYGOER: Then in what way does he set to work? What guides him in his task of lighting the scene and costumes which we are speaking about? STAGE-DIRECTOR: What guides him? Why, the scene and the costumes, and the verse and the prose, and the sense of the play. All these things, as I told you, have now been brought into harmony, the one with the other' (Edward Gordon Craig: *On the Art of the Theatre*, London 1962 – first ed 1911 – p 161).

Or, as expressed with admirable succinctness more recently, 'We wouldn't feel sorry for the old lady if she were sitting in a blaze of lights' (Charles G Clarke: *Professional Cinematography*, Hollywood 1964, p 94).

But whereas the cinema preserved certain codes from the theatre that it largely superseded as popular entertainment, certain others were displaced when technological development exposed their systematic – un-natural – orders. Thus the painted backdrop on which an actor's shadow might blot out a mountain. Thus also the make-up which distinguished good from bad, high from low. And rather than the displacement of one code by another, it was assumed that an advance had been made beyond codicity into pure representationalism. (It is this assumption that vitiates Vardac's *Stage to Screen*, though for wealth of information it is unsurpassed.) The new lighting, at its best, was supposed by its users to be correct and objective because of the model upon which it was based; Clarence Brown recalls working with Maurice Tourneur in the early 1920's:

'Tourneur was an artist. He had been a painter, and although he did little painting while he was making pictures, he painted on the screen. Many of the tricks they use in the picture business today were originated by Tourneur, with his cameraman, John van der Broek. He was a great believer in dark foregrounds. . . . If it was an interior, he always had a piece of the set cutting into the corner of the picture, in halftone, to give him depth. Whenever we saw a painting with an interesting lighting effect, we'd copy it. We had a library of pictures. "Rembrandt couldn't be wrong," we'd say, and we'd set the shot up and light it like Rembrandt. At least we stole from the best!' (Brownlow, op cit, p 161).

The new cinematography was not limited to America, nor were developments there and in Europe without effect upon one another: Charles Rosher, Mary Pickford's photographer, visited the UFA studios before going on a year's contract to Pommer as consultant on *Faust*: 'I did special tests of their stars to demonstrate glamour lighting. They always lit them with heavy, dramatic lighting and deep shadows. . . . Murnau expected to go to America, and he kept asking "How would they do this in Hollywood?"' (ibid, p 263). The German cinema, after producing *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari*, the non-illusionist solution to the collapse of the old staging techniques, perhaps did not come closer than the American cinema to the realisation of Appian theory, but it was undeniably able, because of economic and ideological differences, to achieve results that were more aesthetically impressive: 'In Arthur Robison's little-known film, *Warning Shadows* [photographed by Fritz Arno

106 Wagner], the emphasis is not on the sets but on the use of light. Shadows are not used for ornamental or melodramatic effect but are actually the thematic substance of the film, the means by which Robison explores illusion and reality.<sup>9</sup>

As the most influential German cameramen, Wagner and Karl Freund, from about 1920, permeated first the 'expressionist' then the 'psychological realist' phases of German film with lighting that was perhaps most unlike Hollywood lighting in the thoroughgoing systematicity with which it paralleled the diegetic line. In that harmony there seemed to be a profundity that, in E A Dupont's *Variety*, for example, struck American film-makers, and brought Freund to California, where he would later lend his talents to such films as *Dracula* and *The Good Earth*. The degree to which the new cinematography was accepted in its function of engaging the emotions of the viewer, is evident in the praise heaped upon *Variety* by the young John Grierson, in America on his Rockefeller grant to study the American cinema:

'The atmosphere of the roundabouts is light and airy as befits the happiness of the two lovers; the movement is free, the dark solidity of close-ups is not emphasised. The scene in the caravan with its atmosphere of physical freedom and physical happiness is shot through with light: with the flashing of light on the towel, with the flashing of light on the lady's naked body, etc. Similar effects are gained in the first acrobatic display at the Winter Garden when, as yet, there is no note of tragedy in the air: the dancing of dwarfs becomes a shimmering of silk and a spinning of circles, the trapeze swings back and forward in gentle rhythm. . . . When Jannings stood ready to murder, he was a gigantic shape in the foreground that stood mesmerically still and kept its face away. Against his dark certainty the victim fluttered punily in the light' (John Grierson: 'Putting Atmosphere in Pictures,' *Motion Picture News*, v 34 n 23, December 4, 1926, pp 2141-2).

*Variety* is not an exception; rather it concentrates and exemplifies tendencies possessed to a greater or lesser degree by the characteristic films of the dominant film practice. In half a century there have been no major reversals in the pre-eminent position held by a mode of lighting that was basically in place by 1920. The reasons for this are not to be found in the correctness of this mode, nor in the overwhelming influence of the personal styles of a few great cameramen, but rather in the determinants which have made the film an extension of realist narrative art and the product of a large, potentially highly profitable industry.

9. Arthur Lennig: 'The Sense of Form in Cinema' in Lewis Jacobs, ed: *The Movies as Medium*, New York 1970, p 308. See Paul Rotha: *The Film Till Now*, London 1967, Plate 23 for a hidden light source. Cf Daniels, p 103 above.

Edited by Christine Gledhill

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### Women's Cinema and Feminist Film Criticism

*The Work of Dorothy Arzner: Towards a Feminist Cinema*, edited by Claire Johnston (BFI, 1975), is in two parts: the first, consisting of readings by Pam Cook and Claire Johnston of certain of Dorothy Arzner's films, is specifically intended to raise questions for feminist film-makers and critics. The second part of the pamphlet is composed of an interview with Arzner herself, plus a filmography, both of which originally appeared in *Cinema* (USA). The readings and the interview can in some sense be read as two accounts of, for all practical purposes, the 'same' phenomena, and indeed their publication within the one pamphlet would certainly invite such an interpretation. And yet between the two accounts there is apparent a clear tension, which can be focussed by asking the question of how what Arzner says about her own work makes sense in terms of what Cook and Johnston say about her work – and vice versa. The tension actually hardens into a contradiction in an article on Arzner by Gerald Peary which appears in the same issue of *Cinema* as the interview which is reprinted in the Arzner pamphlet (n 34, Fall 1974, pp 2-9), and in which, from surface readings of some of her films, Arzner is very definitely characterised as a feminist. Of *Christopher Strong*, for example, it is said: 'The picture isn't finally about Strong, but is much more deeply concerned with the women surrounding the man . . . ' (p 4). In the interview, on the other hand, Arzner says of the film: 'I was more interested in Christopher Strong . . . than in any of the women characters. . . . I was really more sympathetic with him' (*The Work of Dorothy Arzner*, p 26). Clearly disagreement of this sort between film-makers and critics is neither unusual nor particularly surprising, and equally clearly Cook and Johnston's accounts of Arzner's work certainly do not – unlike Peary's – constitute surface readings; but nevertheless the simple example I have quoted may actually demonstrate how in the Arzner pamphlet too the readings and the interview operate as varying and non-overlapping accounts of a single body of film texts. This in turn raises the question of how the tensions operating between

108 such differing accounts actually foreground some general methodological problems and contradictions inherent in the notions of both women's cinema and feminist film criticism.

The central problems here are several, and may be located within the relationship between, in general, cinema and ideology, and in particular, cinema, ideology and women. But when talking about cinema and ideology it should not be forgotten that both are inscribed within a social, historical or political milieu, which means that film texts and their means of signification exist as determinate material and ideological products. They are the immediate outcome of the labour of a number of persons, of whom the director is one, and they are at the same time, as Julia Lesage argues in *Women and Film* v I nn 5-6, embedded in a wider social and historical context which 'encompasses both the economic base of the film-maker's milieu as well as the ideological superstructure'.

It seems to me that this is one of the dimensions along which the tension between the two parts of the Arzner pamphlet operates, for the readings of the films are wholly textual, while the interview concerns itself with fairly concrete details of the production of those texts from the point of view of one of the persons concerned with their production. Claire Johnston's criticism does in fact incorporate an awareness of the structural location of film texts; she states in *Notes on Women's Cinema* that 'all films or works of art are products; products of an existing system of economic relations, in the final analysis' and that in line with this view an analysis is required of 'how film operates as a medium within a specific cultural system'. However, there is little or no trace of this awareness in the Arzner pamphlet, in which the films are treated *per se*, as divorced from the conditions of their production. It is fairly obvious from Johnston's essay in *Notes on Women's Cinema* that she at least has, for the purposes of analysing the Arzner oeuvre, only bracketed such considerations in favour of a purely textual analysis, but it is certainly arguable that the tension between the two sections of the pamphlet is partially attributable to the particular methods adopted by both Claire Johnston and Pam Cook, and hence also to the methods excluded or bracketed by them.

As far as their methods are concerned, both Cook and Johnston offer readings of Arzner's films which have as their starting point ideology. Johnston's approach to ideology is to view it as an overdetermined structural element which is to be extracted from the text, while Cook tends to be more concerned with the unconscious operation of ideology within the text, but both views – the Althusserian and the Lacanian – incorporate the structuralist notion of ideology as concealing or effacing itself, or as forming part of a structure which has to be decomposed in order to be discovered and examined. A subversive text, according to both views, would be one in which ideology does not efface itself

entirely, but instead poses contradictions between 'the specific hierarchy of interrelated discourses which each film text comprises and the discourse of the dominant ideology' (*The Work of Dorothy Arzner*, p 3). Such a text thus offers a criticism of itself and hence 'de-naturalises' the ideology by revealing it and making it explicit. For Johnston, this denaturalisation is effected in Arzner's films by the operation of what is called the *discourse of the woman*, which criticises and subverts the dominant (male) ideological discourse, which in the vast majority of films is 'natural', that is, self-effacing. She therefore sees Arzner's films as a process of *rewriting* the dominant discourse by denaturalising it and making the discourse of the woman the principal structuring element. Cook also points to the ways in which dominant patriarchal ideology is subverted and denaturalised in Arzner's films, in this case by such processes as interruptions and reversals in narratives and play with stereotypes about woman, all of which foreground, demonstrate and hence render open to criticism dominant myths about women and the ways in which these myths are embodied in films.

As well as tending to bracket or overlook the immediate material and ideological circumstances surrounding the production of the text, purely text-based criticisms like these will also tend not to examine the relationship between producer, text and audience. In fact, the audience seems to be a neglected, or perhaps more commonly, taken-for-granted element in much film criticism. Even Lesage, whose theoretical framework offered to the feminist film critic is meant to encompass the whole range of issues related to film, gives scant attention to the audience who, she says simply 'can be considered in both individual and collective terms' (op cit, p 13), although the problem of weak feedback between audience and film-maker is, as she points out, quite formidable. Moreover, the assumptions on which studies of 'effects' of media messages on audiences are based have proved over and over again to be highly questionable. It is perhaps these difficulties which have led many film critics, feminist and otherwise, simply to assume the nature of the relationship between film text and audience. It is clear, for example, that Johnston feels that most audiences are conditioned to want illusionism, because this constitutes the dominant means of signification in a bourgeois and patriarchal society; and her notion of what would constitute a feminist counter-cinema is based on this assumption. As Christine Geraghty pointed out in *Screen* v 15 n 4, p 91, this is a matter that needs to be considered much more thoroughly.

So far I have already argued that the internal tension within the Arzner pamphlet can be seen in part as a result of a gap between a criticism which is solely text-based and an interview which focusses on the circumstances surrounding the actual production of a body of films. But a further source of tension between the two approaches may also be identified, and one which the *Christopher*

110 Strong example mentioned earlier illustrates – and that is the problem of in what way Arzner's films may be considered as feminist. In the interview, it is clear that Arzner wishes to avoid the label of feminism either for herself or for her films; but this is hardly surprising in view of the unique position she held in Hollywood in a male-dominated industry, and the adverse and patronising publicity to which she was subject during her career. The problem here is the more specific question of *feminist* film criticism. In addressing this question, Lesage suggests that a feminist film critic should ideally take into account features of a film other than the text *per se*, and to this end offers a schema based on an elaborated, Parsonian-type, version of the infrastructure/superstructure model of culture. But the problem with this model is how and where one is to inscribe sexism as a determinant. Or to put the question another way, in what sense is there such a thing as (i) a feminist film, and/or (ii) feminist film criticism? The answer for Johnston and Cook would lie once more with ideology. In bourgeois society, film is inscribed in bourgeois ideology, and hence the dominant means of cinematic signification are bourgeois. The argument is also applicable specifically to women's cinema: 'Art can only be defined as a discourse within a particular conjuncture – for the purpose of women's cinema, the bourgeois, sexist ideology of male dominated capitalism' (p 28). And indeed in their readings of Arzner's films, both Cook and Johnston refer frequently to the ways in which *patriarchal* ideologies are subverted, de-naturalised, 'made strange'. Sexism, then, is located within the patriarchal ideologies operating in films, and therefore a feminist film would be one in which these ideologies are internally criticised, made explicit and cracked open.

The fact that Cook and Johnston, in the context of Arzner's films, speak exclusively of patriarchal ideologies suggests that their approach tends to be in its strictest sense feminist, although Johnston at least is at pains to point out in her earlier work the bourgeois as well as sexist nature of dominant ideologies. This point raises once more – in this instance in connection with film making and film criticism – the question of the uneasy relationship between socialism and feminism. An emphasis on either one or the other would produce a different result in each case. For example, Martin-eau's interview with Nelly Kaplan in *Notes on Women's Cinema* focusses on the feminist concern with myths and stereotypes of women created and maintained by the cinema, and suggests that the key to creating a feminist counter-cinema lies in the portrayal of an authentic cultural heroine like Marie in *La Fiancée du Pirate*. Kaplan says quite categorically that such a strategy is best undertaken within the dominant means of cinematic signification, especially the entertainment film, 'because it is consistent with the pleasure principle. It is through the "entertainment" film that the collective fantasies of women can most easily and most effec-



tively be trapped' (p 15). A Marxist-feminist approach would, on the other hand, have actually to reject the dominant means of signification as both sexist and bourgeois, and aim to create a feminist counter-cinema out of this rejection (cf Peter Wollen: 'Counter-Cinema: Vent d'Est,' *Afterimage* n 4, Autumn 1972). In *Notes on Women's Cinema* there is a definite unresolved tension between feminist and Marxist-feminist approaches, both within and between articles. Claire Johnston's manifesto that 'new meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film' (p 29) is only partially fulfilled by her choice of Dorothy Arzner's films as an object of criticism and, more specifically, by her critical practice, which focusses almost wholly on the denaturalisation of patriarchal, rather than bourgeois, ideologies within Arzner's oeuvre. 111

Although this feature of Johnston's and Cook's readings of Arzner's films springs in part from a genuine difficulty in resolving the relationship between feminist and socialist approaches to criticism, I would argue that their preoccupation with patriarchy is also to some extent a result of their concentration on a textual analysis of the films divorced from a consideration of the structural determinants of the nature of those films. And linked with this are those features of Arzner's films which they consider relevant to their arguments: these tend, especially in Cook's essay, to centre on the structure of the narrative, on stereotypes of women characters, and on characterisation in general. Lesage's remarks on the antecedents of film criticism in literary criticism are perhaps of relevance here: 'We bring to film criticism . . . approaches already applied to literature in the academic world. *Auteur* criticism is, for example, marked by a psychoanalytic approach – the search for themes, archetypes, underlying psychological patterns . . .' (op cit, p 16). In other words, even in concentrating almost exclusively on Arzner's films as self-sufficient texts, Johnston and Cook rarely extend their readings to take into account the specifically *cinematic* codings within those texts: in this context Elizabeth Cowie has pointed to the absence of work on the interaction of myths about women and the mode of production of meaning within films, and mentions how heavily ideologically implicated is the visual image (*Screen* v 16 n 1, pp 136 and 138). An analysis of dominant cinematic codes in relation to women might well link with the broader question of illusionism as the dominant means of signification in films, and hence possibly point towards a feminist counter-cinema whose aim is to challenge dominant male and bourgeois depictions of 'reality'. Therefore the nature of any feminist counter-cinema would depend very much on what exactly is to be challenged in non-feminist films. The extreme types of a feminist counter-cinema might well consist of films portraying a female cultural heroine via the conventional means of the entertainment film (*La Fiancée du Pirate*?) and films questioning at the level of cinematic codes

112 myths and stereotypes of women and images of women within texts which themselves constitute a foregrounding of the dominant means of signification (*Penthesilea*?).

Although it is a question with which Claire Johnston opens her essay on Dorothy Arzner, the problem of the relationship between women's cinema and feminist film criticism has been in large measure assumed in this discussion. Feminist film criticism actually creates women's cinema by talking about it and analysing it through 'feminist' readings of existing texts (or in conjunction with ongoing film-making activity). It is in this sense that the readings of Arzner's films by Claire Johnston and Pam Cook have rewritten those films as feminist texts.

ANNETTE KUHN

### The Re-appearance of *Movie*

With n 20, *Movie* re-appears after a gap of three years. That period has seen the emergence of Marxism, semiology and structuralism into the field of film study in this country. The arrival of these disciplines has resulted in a concerted theoretical attack on much that *Movie* held dear and on much that constituted its critical methods and assumptions. *Movie* and its writers have now had ample opportunity to re-consider and re-assess these methods and assumptions in the light of this attack, but, as the new issue reveals, any re-consideration and re-assessment there has been has in the main ended with an affirmation of the former concerns, positions and values, despite numerous demonstrations of their inadequacies.

This is most clearly evident in the long discussion that heads the new issue. Here, 1940's and 1950's Hollywood films are re-affirmed as the evaluative yardstick and auteurism is re-affirmed as a prime mode of analysis. This is symptomatic of the retention of broader attitudes and positions which manifest themselves most plainly in the discussions on 'Aims' and 'Semiology'. Here Robin Wood's intellectual philistinism ('If the findings of semiology ever manage to be expressed in intelligible English, they might prove of value', p 24) may be uncharacteristic in its extremity, but his inability to understand the discipline (equating it as he does with the clause analysis of traditional grammar) and his distrust of the kind of theoretical concerns it represents, are clearly also shared by Michael Walker and Ian Cameron. Hence the former's assertion, despite all the writings in *Screen* and elsewhere on the problematic status of the subject, that 'Cukor', the unifying function of the logic of auteurist critical discourse, is 'the guy behind the camera who directs' (p 16). The almost parodic empiricism inherent in this remark is, again, only an extreme instance of the empiricism

characteristic of *Movie* and the kind of criticism it represents.

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It ought to be said at this point that Jim Hillier and, to a lesser degree, Victor Perkins, do understand the objections to such criticism and are interested in approaches that seek to overcome its limitations. Indeed both constantly attempt to qualify a number of assertions and comments made by the other three participants. However, I think it is significant, unfortunately, that the articles in the rest of the issue all exhibit, to a greater or lesser degree, the hallmarks of traditional *Movie* criticism and its limitations.

Thus Charles Barr's piece, 'Approaching Television', although welcome in its call for more rigorous and sustained critical attention to the medium, proposes, essentially, traditional auteur and genre analysis as a way of beginning to come to terms with it, though with the former aimed at the writer rather than the director.

Almost as if to illustrate the deficiencies of these modes of analysis, the other two articles in the issue are on genre ('Genre and Movies' by Douglas Pye) and on an auteur ('Claude Chabrol: into the Seventies' by Michael Walker).

The former is by far the more theoretically interesting, attempting as it does to bring some kind of coherence to genre criticism and to point to and resolve its confusions and inadequacies. Pye rightly rejects any attempt to base generic specificity on iconography and seeks to locate the traditional Hollywood genres within the overall genre of 'the Hollywood narrative film'. However, he is rather vague as regards the codic specificities of the latter and seeks to base analysis of the former, using the example of the Western, on Northrop Frye's theory of generic modes. The weaknesses of Frye's theory have, as he himself notes, been pointed out by Tzvetan Todorov, and these weaknesses are compounded by his own theory that the Western is, generally, a high mimetic mode in a low mimetic manner, a theory which unfortunately seems to boil down to the rather banal observation that: 'A tension between a realism of presentation and a much greater degree of abstraction at other levels does seem characteristic of many Westerns' (p 37). What makes it worse is that the theory comes suspiciously close to being a strategy for declaiming, yet again, the artistic merits of Ford and Hawks.

Michael Walker's article is basically a traditional auteur analysis of the later films of Claude Chabrol. It takes the form of a consideration of and answer to critics of Walker's type of approach and, more specifically, Mark le Fanu's article on Chabrol in *Mono-gram* 5. Le Fanu criticises Walker and Robin Wood, in their book on Chabrol, for treating Chabrol's style as transparent, reading through it to the meaning beneath and thus failing to analyse its character. Le Fanu maintains that the signifiers in Chabrol's later films are so 'artificially' and densely self-referential that the *mise-en-scène* as a whole becomes parodic, ironically distanced from

Walker's answer to these criticisms seems to me to exhibit a misunderstanding of the issues involved. He characterises a 'structuralist' approach to the cinema as an 'emphasis on the framework and "recurring signs"' (p 52), which entails an impoverishment of the film or films concerned. He is presumably thinking here of Peter Wollen's analysis of Ford and Hawks in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, in which case he is probably right, but a method is not responsible for its users. Besides, Walker entirely ignores later developments in structuralism, in which *any* signs in a film or films are located within a network of codic systems. Further, his assertion that Chabrol 'is not so much indicting the ideology of a class as the particular ideology of certain representatives of that class' (p 53), misses the essential point about the Marxist concept of ideology – that it is *class* based and does not describe the specific ideas of individuals except insofar as they relate to this. As for Le Fanu's thesis, Walker's refusal to attend to Chabrol's *mise-en-scène* as a system (rather than, as he does, providing a reading for certain individual signs) means that the issue remains unresolved.

While it is good to see the debate about critical methods and assumptions continuing, it is to be hoped that *Movie's* future contributions to that debate are more informed than much of issue 20 would indicate. It seems, however, in the light of what I have said above, that this will not be the case.

The reasons for this are obviously complex. When *Movie* first began it provided the incalculably valuable service of insisting on the importance of examining Hollywood films with seriousness and rigour. However, the Hollywood it was examining and validating was fast disappearing. There was a disintegration not only of Hollywood's old production system, something which had been happening ever since the late 1940's but was accelerating at this time, but also of its aesthetic system(s), its rhetoric, to use Perkins' term. The relaxation of censorship, the introduction of technical features such as the zoom and telephoto lenses (often borrowed from television), the retirement or at best intermittent appearance of a whole battery of veteran directors like Sirk, Ray, Ford, Walsh, Lang, Boetticher and Mann, the fragmentation and diminution of audiences all combined and interacted in a process of disintegration and change. Essentially then, *Movie* was writing about, and validating, a dying art. What had characterised this art had been its sense of audience, the certainty of its mass appeal and this accounts for what I take to be its basic humanism. It further accounts for its highly stable system of basic conventions and its sophisticated technical coherence, allowing for precisely the detailed examination of *mise-en-scène*, camera placement and overall style characteristic of much of *Movie's* criticism. The values of many of its writers were such as to be significantly attuned to

this Hollywood – humanism, individualism, a distrust of self-consciousness and a validation of such stable community values as those of which Hollywood was precisely a product. By the late 1960's, however, the new Hollywood was firmly established, a Hollywood characterised by a less stable system of techniques and conventions, an aesthetic self-consciousness (witness the many watered-down borrowings of New-Wave stylisms) and, just as important, an uneasy juxtaposition of often mutually alien values, the latter related to factors such as the Vietnam war, the growth of the New Left and the beginnings of the end of the long post-war boom and America's socio-economic hegemony. 115

Movie was caught within the changes in both Hollywood and the socio-cultural sphere generally and it seems that unless it turns its attention more rigorously to comprehending these changes and their implications for its approach and method, it will fail in what I take to be its twin objectives of continuing to analyse Hollywood authoritatively and of contributing meaningfully to current critical debates.

STEVE NEALE

### Feminist Politics and Film History

The considerable interest that the role of women in film history, both as spectacle and as a creative force, has aroused in the last two or three years would be impossible to imagine outside the context of a feminist politics. Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape* (New English Library), Marjorie Rosen's *Popcorn Venus* (Peter Owen) and Joan Mellen's *Women and their Sexuality in the New Film* (Davis Poynter) reflect this interest and the intervention women are attempting to make in the cinema. All three derive essentially from the dominant traditions of practical criticism based on personal response and subjectivity; nevertheless, they foreground the theoretical problems implicit in the re-assessment of the question of women and cinema, and their main merit could be seen as introducing feminist issues into journalistic practice. In the first place, they pose the question of film history itself. In general, film historians have confined themselves to accumulating facts, constructing chronologies, and then, by a process of induction, attempting to derive therefrom an interpretation of historical events. Such an enterprise is closely linked either to positivist notions of evolution and development, or to moralistic notions of a 'golden age' followed by a descent into decadence. The role of women in film history inevitably raises questions about the nature of film history as so conceived, for the way women are represented in the cinema at any particular point in historical time must of necessity pose the problem of how film relates to the social con-

The most simplistic attempts to come to terms with the way film relates to the social context are manifested in 'reflection theories' of the cinema, which see the world created in films as a mirror of the real world, albeit a distorting mirror. Marjorie Rosen's book, *Popcorn Venus*, corresponds most closely to this model; it consists of a largely anecdotal account of the image of woman as reflected in a strictly chronological arrangement of film history from 1900 to the present day. Quoting statistics of female employment, prostitution etc, the writer attempts to show how the cinema has held a 'warped mirror up to life'. For instance, while films of the 1920's 'embraced the same tremendous class flexibility that life was suddenly offering', an 'astounding number of pictures' extolling the working class girl's new social 'mobility', the Depression years and the decline of the first wave of the Women's Movement brought a stop to this, and the independent woman (eg Bette Davis, Jean Arthur) of this second period was designed to induce a false sense of well-being for women: 'Suggesting possibilities which life for the most part did not . . . refusing to show existing conditions, they packaged a lie insulating females from the fact of their social and economic determining.' However, the Second World War and the social and economic changes which it brought for women led to the development of the 'woman's movie' as a genre, featuring actresses like Katherine Hepburn: 'The two major world wars have elicited a tremendous collective response from women, resulting in reforms by and for them, reforms reflected on the screen.' The 1950's, 1960's and 1970's reflect a decline into permissiveness, madness and decadence: 'Industry has turned its back on reflecting it (the situation of women) in any constructive or analytical way'; all that remains is the grotesque bi-sexuality of pop heroes - 'the macho and the androgynous are at last one'. Such a Romantic conception of historical development, tracing a decline from a hypostatised, mythical situation in the 1920's, when films reflected the 'real' situation of women, to the decadence of the present day, draws on an ideological model of history based on the idealist notion that at some point in time there can be an ideal relation between a work of art and the society from which it derives, and it is this idealist model of art which underlies Marjorie Rosen's notion of the feminist film itself. This notion is informed by an elitist attitude to popular art in general, and a view of Hollywood as a 'dream machine' producing a monolithically oppressive product: only the European cinema of Truffaut, Schlesinger or Bergman 'takes its heroines seriously', reflecting the 'realities of today's world'. Marjorie Rosen's position, then, rests on a realist aesthetic which asserts the innocence of the sign and reinforces the popular assumption that sexist ideology is less present in European cinema because stereotyping appears less obvious. Ignoring the whole question of myth as a form of speech producing new

connotative meanings, her book falls into the crude determinist trap of seeing the 'commercial' cinema as necessarily more manipulative of the image of woman than the 'art' cinema. 117

Clearly, Marjorie Rosen's book derives from a tradition of amateurism and subjective response which characterised much of the early feminist film criticism (eg early issues of *Women and Film*) and conveys a moralism characteristic of bourgeois critical practice in general. Nevertheless, as a journalistic practice this kind of approach may be able to fulfil a short-term progressive function in a practice dominated by such writers as Pauline Kael, Parker Tyler, Penelope Houston, Alexander Walker, though this progressive aspect is infinitely recuperable.

Molly Haskell's book takes a similar perspective on film history: 'Movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artefacts and mirrors' and sexist ideology itself is presented as a process of deception, the movie business being 'dedicated for the most part to reinforcing the lie' of woman's inferiority, Hollywood taking the role of 'propaganda arm of the American dream machine'. This fundamentally erroneous conception of ideology and myth means that Molly Haskell does not have to confront the essential question of how ideology is inscribed into the actual material practices of the cinema, such as the structuring of the narrative, the production of the 'realism' effect etc. This is a pity, because her book draws on a far more progressive approach to film criticism and popular art in general than Marjorie Rosen's, the approach associated with the development of auteur criticism in America in the late 1950's and early 1960's which opened up the enormous potential interest of Hollywood cinema (cf Andrew Sarris's work). Molly Haskell presents a polemical case for Hollywood which at times appears to be at odds with her feminist critique of it: attacking the widely-held assumption that European cinema is less sexist than Hollywood, she polemically asserts the opposite, claiming that European cinema is 'more cynical and sexist' and draws on myths deriving from much older cultural traditions. But lacking any theory of how myth operates in the cinema, she can go no further. In fact her engagement with auteur theory does not go beyond the notion of director as creative personality, and hence fails to effect any radical break with the idea of the art cinema, merely transplanting assumptions about the art cinema into Hollywood. Cukor (*Pat and Mike*, *Adam's Rib*, *Sylvia Scarlett*), Hawks (*To Have and Have Not*), Ophüls (*Letter from an Unknown Woman*) and Sirk (*All That Heaven Allows*) emerge as directors who have presented a feminine point of view. She cites the entire career of Katherine Hepburn as a particular achievement for feminism, and Cukor's *Adam's Rib*, made in 1949, as the first commercial feminist film, in that it celebrates the ideal of the genuine, egalitarian sexual relationship. However, another conception of the auteur emerges in the course

118 of the book, and that is the star herself, and it is in this extension of auteurism that the degeneration of auteur theory into a mere cult of personality becomes most evident. One of the contradictions of the sexist 'dream machine' of Hollywood was that it 'raised women to spheres of power and influence beyond the wildest dreams of most of their sex'. In the hey-day of the star system, women effectively dominated the industry, were billed higher than men and offered innovatory role definitions for both men and women. She asserts that in this period (the 1920's and 1930's) there is often a contradiction between star and stereotype: 'Through sheer will and talent and charisma, images of emotional and intellectual power' emerge despite stereotyping. Since this 'Golden Age', the cinema has witnessed a decline into the decadence of the 1970's: we have 'lost sexual confidence' and 'faith in narrative forms': women are no longer the focus of the 'director's passion', men having appropriated characteristics once attached to movie heroines. We have arrived at the 'dead end of the old order': women's 'real' work and intelligence has been obliterated from the screen and the image of woman is reduced to the level of pin-up or model. In fact, the importance of stereotyping in the Hollywood cinema is quite the opposite of what Molly Haskell suggests: it is not the star who transcends the stereotype, but on the contrary it is the repeated conjunction of signs which make up the stereotype, including the image of the actress herself, which produce the concept 'star' in the first place. Thus it is the stereotype 'star' which 'transcends' the actress. The notion of the star itself is part of the stereotyping of Hollywood: the actress while present in body is absent in person. In this way, the iconography of the stereotype, serving as a kind of short-hand for a cultural tradition, can be used to provide a critique of it, by subverting that tradition (eg parody).

Tracing the decline of 'classical art with a world, a plot', a Romantic, idealist conception of film history, does not get Molly Haskell very far, despite some attempt at a greater engagement with the aesthetic problems raised by the problem of women and film. In fact, what it leads to is a nostalgia, an erroneous collapsing of auteur theory with the star system and a retreat into a classicist aesthetic. However, there is one aspect of the book which should be explored further, which is her discussion of the 'woman's film', a genre looked down on by audiences and critics alike. It is a genre in which women are nearly always the central protagonists and which revolves around the theme of love. Citing Elizabeth Dalton's research on the series of films made by Warners in the 1930's about women and work (cf *The Velvet Light Trap* n 6), Molly Haskell sees the birth of the genre in these films, and explains their narrative resolution through love not in terms of recuperation as Elizabeth Dalton tended to do, but in terms of the demands of the genre. She goes on to examine the development of



the genre and its critique of American middle-class family life, the rigidity of moral codes and the circumscribed world of the housewife, and compares it with written women's fiction. 119

'Because the woman's film was designed for and tailored to a certain market, its recurrent themes represent the closest thing to an expression of the collective drives, conscious and unconscious, of American women, of their avowed obligation and their unconscious resistance.'

The resolution of the narrative always involves sacrifice for the woman, usually in terms of the demands of motherhood. Despite a certain tendency towards a glib psychologism, in this part of her book Molly Haskell opens up an interesting area for study and comes close to discerning in what way such questions as narrative relate to the repression of the feminine in the film text (for an examination of this question, see 'Femininity and the Masquerade: Anne of the Indies' in *Jacques Tourneur*, Edinburgh Film Festival, 1975). However, her retreat from the problems raised by film theory means that she can get no further. The way the 'woman's film' shares its narrative conventions with the melodrama is never explored, for instance. In her 'obligation to the wholeness and complexity of film history' Molly Haskell informs us that she is a film critic 'first' and a feminist 'second': quite clearly this impressionistic account of the decline and fall of a Golden Age offers little to our understanding of the 'complexity of film history'. Furthermore, her assertion that 'art will always take precedence over sociology, the unique over the general' in a real sense evades the complex theoretical problems which the discussion of women and film has raised. A somewhat disturbing aspect of the book is the defensive attitude to feminism which singles her out from the other writers here: phrases like 'totalitarian stridency' and 'outraged feminism' in reference to the Women's Movement surface frequently. Too often she reverts to a bland mixture of incredulity and boredom when faced with feminist politics, a tone which has become all too familiar to readers of 'informed' and 'sympathetic' writing on feminist issues in the 'quality' press in recent years and shades of which can even be found in the long-awaited initiation of feminist issues in this journal itself. Ultimately, Molly Haskell speaks from her position within the American critical establishment, where to be a 'feminist second' is, no doubt, a requirement.

Joan Mellen's *Women and their Sexuality in the New Film* does not purport to be a history of women in the cinema and in this way avoids some of the pitfalls inherent to that approach. Instead she addresses herself to the more general question of myth and stereotype in the cinema. Film is seen as a 'commodity' which has 'insinuated and promoted set values and perceptions of character, endorsing a definable status quo'. She sees myths operating in

120 the European cinema and independent film-making as fundamentally of the same order as those operating in the Hollywood cinema. The book takes the form of a series of articles, some of which are on general topics like sexuality, the bourgeois woman, lesbianism, while others are concerned with specific modern films (*Last Tango in Paris*, *Up the Sandbox*, *WR – Mysteries of the Organism*) or directors (Rohmer, Bergman) and the persona of Mae West. What is most interesting is her foregrounding of the whole question of developing a feminist cinema and of feminist politics *per se*. Tied to their chronologies, the other books are finally trapped by them, unable to escape the ideological model of history they put forward. Joan Mellen's impressionistic and largely subjective essays nevertheless come nearer to approaching the questions raised by women and film – myth, representation, narrative – though these issues are never tackled in any theoretical way. What seems implicit in her approach is some sense of the film text as an artefact with a structure, rather than a communication embodying some notion of 'truth'. There is some sense also in which she sees a film as an ideological practice which functions in a particular historical conjuncture, rather than as a simple reflection of society. In this way, she sees the emergence of the theme of the independent woman as a 'form of co-option', though this assertion is not backed up by any formal analysis of the way such a 'co-option' is achieved in the film text. The career-woman roles of Katherine Hepburn and Joan Crawford in the 1940's in their very 'unfemininity' are seen to relate to a 'capitalism in temporary crisis'. Viewed in this light, an analysis of the present situation becomes possible in terms other than the decline into 'decadence'. Joan Mellen sees the films of the 1960's and 1970's as a 'co-option' of the 'radical surge' of the first of these decades. The independent women of this era (eg Bree in *Klute*, Mrs Miller in *McCabe and Mrs Miller*) are characterised by a fundamental lack of personal integration, by loneliness and despair. In this way, she claims, the modern Hollywood film 'cashes in on' and 'co-opts' the Women's Movement. This is taken to its logical conclusion in films like Kershner's *Up the Sandbox* which attempt to refurbish the ideology of the bourgeois family with a systematic ridicule of feminism itself. Along with this, she places importance on films which foreground the nature and structure of patriarchy (eg Buñuel's *Tristana* and Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*) and the persona of Mae West who 'subverts' the ideology of sexism with her reversal of male/female roles, though in the case of Mae West, she too makes the erroneous assumption that the star can be an auteur. Clearly, there is much here that calls for a more systematic analysis, which cannot be achieved by the methods of practical criticism that Joan Mellen employs; her more rigorous political perspective on feminism, however, ultimately gets her further than the other writers.

But it is on the issue of developing a feminist cinema and the

importance of women film directors in the past that the flaws in the three books come most sharply into focus. With no sense of film theory, none of the writers are able to give an adequate account of how a feminist cinema can develop and what, if any, contributions to that cinema have been made by women in the past. Ultimately none of them can see further than the narrative art film (Molly Haskell extending it to include Hollywood), and with no examination of such questions as fiction/documentary, narrative forms, the position of the spectator, the problem of realism, they are forced to evade the issue. Joan Mellen states emphatically that 'the art film is the narrative film' and that 'documentary is not of the same order', at the same time asserting that most women's films and socialist films are 'bourgeois', without attempting to examine the implications of such a statement. In desperation, she cites Newman's *Rachel, Rachel* and *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds* as important for feminism because of their 'sensitive portrayals' of women, and thus the argument reverts once more to bourgeois humanist values and identification. Molly Haskell's notion of a feminist cinema is ultimately restricted by her fuzzy feminism, which seems to centre around the desire to establish truly egalitarian relationships between men and women and little more, apart from odd bits of social engineering. Feminist films should trace this reconciliation between men and women, reflecting mutual respect, flexibility of role playing, 'love' and camaraderie rather than the distrust which has characterised the political confrontation brought about by feminist politics. In fact, a return to the Golden Age of *Adam's Rib* and *Pat and Mike*. She seems not to have noticed that questioning the nuclear family has been central to the feminist critique of patriarchal culture; far from wanting to develop a feminist cinema, she wishes the necessity for it would disappear altogether, seeing reforms within the structure of the film industry as the way to achieve this. For Marjorie Rosen, the development of a women's cinema involves a realist aesthetic: in capturing the real situation of women in our society, the cinema achieves a truth, 'an ideal which is possible and which assimilates the realities of today's world'. Thus *The Year of the Woman*, the poetess Sandra Hochman's highly personal documentary diary about female participation in the 1972 Democratic Convention, and *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* are singled out as important films in this perspective. This vacuum at the centre of these studies assumes disconcerting proportions when the writers attempt to focus on women film-makers. Dorothy Arzner is dismissed as just a 'good professional', while Molly Haskell claims that the films Ida Lupino directed are in fact sexist, her films as an actress with Raoul Walsh being of more interest than those she made herself. The fact that these women directors disavow any interest in feminism is presented as proof of their lack of interest for feminist cinema,

122 a point I shall refer to later. Indeed, the cursory nature of these aspects of the books, their frequent inaccuracies (eg Marjorie Rosen's assertion that Artaud credited Germaine Dulac as the 'mother of surrealism' when, in fact, he accused her in public of betraying it) and a general paucity of information ultimately put into question their attempt to present a feminist history of the cinema altogether.

All three books reflect a particular stage in the feminist intervention in film criticism which has by now been superseded, although their intervention at the level of journalistic practice itself may still have some function. It is therefore particularly important that, whatever their journalistic merits, they should not be inscribed into curricula dealing with women's studies. Feminist film criticism has developed considerably from this simplistic ideological history of the cinema: more recent issues of *Women and Film* have been devoted to the development of film theory (eg Julia Lesage's article 'Feminist Film Criticism: Theory and Practice,' in n 5/6) and to a greater understanding of what it means to assess the role women have played in film history beyond presenting a 'heritage of personal achievement'. In this country feminist film criticism (see for example Laura Mulvey's article in the present number of *Screen*, 'The Place of Women in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh' in Phil Hardy, ed: *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh International Film Festival 1974, and *The Cinema of Dorothy Arzner*, British Film Institute 1975) has taken a very different direction: here emphasis has been placed on the primacy of the film text itself, relating very directly to current developments in film theory as such. The foregrounding of the problem of reading and text construction in relation to 'classic Hollywood cinema' is based on the assumption that only through an analysis of text construction, of representation and of how meaning is produced in the film text, can the possible foundation of a genuinely revolutionary feminist cinema be laid. It also means that the film text can no longer be considered as the expression of its author's pre-existing ideological position (the assumption of the books under review): patriarchal ideology is an effect of the form of the film text itself, and may even in isolated cases be at variance with the beliefs of the author. To make a film is to submit oneself to the rules and meanings generated by 'classic Hollywood cinema' which still provides the dominant codes with which films are read and will continue to do so for some time to come (to a lesser extent, the dominant modes of television documentary provide a similar function for political film-makers). This domain of form imposes itself on the filmmaker whether or no he or she likes it, defining the limits and meanings of the work of art itself. For instance, the importance of Dorothy Arzner's work is not that she is a self-conscious feminist expressing her concerns within the Hollywood system, but that as film texts her films open up an area of contradiction within the

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'classic Hollywood cinema' which expose the limits imposed by the form itself. In this sense, Dorothy Arzner, the individual, whether feminist or otherwise, is no longer the concern of feminist film criticism and the two should not be methodologically confused. She is an effect of the text, or as Peter Wollen puts it, 'an unconscious catalyst'. The task of proving her historical importance does not primarily lie with situating her work in time. To adapt Brecht's dictum about the re-presentation of texts written in the past: it is only against the background of our time (ie the politics of the Women's Movement and the present state of theoretical knowledge which place all texts) that their shape emerges: and without this background they probably would have no shape at all. The shape of these film texts consists of the intra- and inter-textual relations at work in any given film, a network within which the ideologies (eg a form of patriarchal ideology) are produced. To disengage and place such ideologies is of primary importance for feminist criticism and must take precedence over such premature and secondary activities as the exploration of extra-textual determinations. Indeed how is one to recognise such an external determination if one has not examined the way elements within the film text function in the first place? Another important aspect of such a position is that textual production – the act of filming and the act of reading the film – comprise two moments of equal value, neither having priority over the other. Thus, the traditional division between work and leisure in capitalist society, with the viewer as passive consumer of the film, is broken down. Just as the author produces the film text, so the viewer must work on the film text. Divested of the dominant myths of transparency and self-expression, it can be viewed as a material object in which meanings are produced, and studied in its own right, meanings being produced not by the author alone, but by the film-maker and viewer together. This emphasis on the way elements within the film text function – the notion of textual production – constitutes the real contribution of auteur theory to film criticism, as Peter Wollen suggests.

It is the unconscious system of representation which orders culture and through which works of art are rendered comprehensible that is at the centre of the enterprise of textual reading and text construction. It is therefore in this context that Lévi-Strauss's work becomes so important, for he demonstrates how in any society, social communication basically operates on three different levels: verbal communication (a high-speed communication), myth as a system of communication (a medium-speed communication) and the kinship system which communicates through the exchange of women (a slow-speed communication). In this way kinship studies and linguistics approach the same kinds of problems on different strategic levels, pertaining essentially to the same field. Culture consists not only of language, to which we

124 must all submit in order to achieve 'humanity', but also of rules stating how the games of communication should be played. Juliet Mitchell (cf *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, now a Pelican paperback) cites kinship systems as the dominant way in which women are still defined in our culture, while men are predominantly defined by historical processes. In this sense, despite whatever value she may hold in any given society, woman is essentially a message which is being communicated in patriarchal culture, and it is in her inscription through stereotyping and myth as a sign which is being exchanged that she operates, finally, in the dominant cultural forms. In art, therefore, and hence in the film text, the representation of woman is not primarily a sociological theme or problem, as is often thought, but a sign which is being communicated.

However, without wanting to fall into the reductionist trap of some feminist film critics (eg Julia Lesage's economic-reductionist/social-behaviourist 'grand theory' outline cited above), there is a real danger that the textual analysis we are engaged in, and in particular the application of psychoanalytic theory, may lead to a kind of a-historical voluntarism, in which the particular historical conjuncture in which the film functions is rendered irrelevant. In this respect, these studies, in their very deficiencies, offer a corrective and pose the question afresh for us. This is particularly important if feminist film critics are to relate their critical practice to the present conjuncture and to make any effective intervention in the Women's Movement. Clearly, a feminist analysis of Dorothy Arzner's work is now more relevant than any analysis of the secondary determinations which may have formed it.

Generally speaking, it is the *knowledge* of the way a film text functions which must be related to an analysis of the present conjuncture, its ideological, political and economic determinations. This task of re-inserting the products of the feminist activity of reading/writing into the present conjuncture is vital if we are to make any real headway. Obviously the production of such knowledge must take into account the social relations which determine the text at the time of its production. However, there is very little work in this area of film studies which feminist film critics can draw on at the present time (*Cahiers du Cinéma* is one of the few magazines now undertaking it). In this country we have a situation in which film theory and film practice have little or no meeting point in the Women's Movement and where subjective response and personal expression (eg in the feminist search for 'identity') are validated in our politics. Yet it is in the working through of this very contradiction, between our politics and the dominant ideologies by which we live, that hope for the struggle lies.

CLAIRE JOHNSTON

Metz's work constitutes a blueprint for a semiotics of the cinema, and now two of his books are at last available in English: *Film Language, a semiotics of the cinema*, translated by Michael Taylor (Oxford University Press, New York, 1974); and *Language and Cinema*, translated by Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (Mouton, The Hague, 1974). The substantial discussion these texts have already received (see *Screen* v 14 nn 1/2 and 3, 1973, and especially Brian Henderson in *Film Quarterly* v XXVIII n 3, Spring 1975) provides a helpful clarification, particularly of the early essays where the problematic is still somewhat confused. Difficulties and inconsistencies in these early essays, especially the equation of cinema with narration, have been solved in *Language and Cinema* through elucidation of the 'cinematic-filmic' relation and the construction of specific codes.

Metz has strictly delimited fields for separate discussion in his distinction between the 'cinematic' as a specific 'fact' and the 'filmic' as an *area* where the specific and the non-specific meet. Thus 'cinematic language' is described as the totality of the cinematic codes and sub-codes, and 'filmic writing', the production of the individual textual system, the film, as an operation involving the *displacement* of codes through co-presence, contamination and interaction. A large part of his work has been concerned with terminological definitions and re-definitions of notions previously held by both film theorists and semioticians. And one of the most fruitful (indeed accessible) aspects of his work is precisely this critical survey of previous film theory and aesthetics.

The English translation of the *Essais sur la signification au cinéma I*, however, is unsatisfactory in several respects: not only can the title *Film Language* be easily confused with the later *Language and Cinema*, but the text itself is not without inaccuracies. Eg 'à tout coup' is confused with 'tout à coup' and translated by 'immediately', instead of 'inevitably' or 'every time' (p 45); 'photogrammes' by 'photographs' instead of 'frames' (p 46); 'pano-travelling' by 'tracking shot', not 'panning-tracking shot' (p 48). And there are oddities: 'montage-roi' becomes 'montage or bust'. Typographic distinctions within the text are not always respected. More importantly 'le signifié' is here translated by yet another term, the 'significate'. Although this decision is explained in a terminological note: 'significate' already exists in the OED and is clearly distinguished from the 'signifier', its use here is in fact unhelpful and unnecessarily confusing. Since the English publication of Barthes's *Elements of Semiology* (Cape, London, 1967) there has been an attempt to standardise the terminology of semiotic and linguistic texts.

On the other hand, the translation of 'langue' and 'langage' does correspond to that adopted in the *Elements* ('language system' and 'language' respectively), whereas in *Language and*

126 Cinema 'langue' is translated by 'a language' and 'langage' by 'language system'. Nevertheless, the English edition of *Langage et Cinéma* is generally a more reliable translation, even if its layout does not reproduce the French text's clear punctuation of phases in the discussion. It also includes a bibliography of references, though English editions of works listed do not always appear there, but instead in footnotes to the text itself.

Bettetini, on the other hand, is little known in this country, though reference to *The Language and Technique of the Film* (Cinema: lingua e scrittura, Bompiani, Milan 1968), translated by David Osmond-Smith (Mouton, The Hague, 1973), will be found in Metz's works and in Eco's *La struttura assente* (Bompiani, Milan 1968; *La structure absente*, Mercure, Paris, 1972).

Gianfranco Bettetini is a film theoretician and film-maker from Milan, and professor of History and Criticism of Film at Genoa State University and Milan Catholic University, as well as Scientific Director of the Milan Gemelli Institute. He is also Vice-President of the Italian Association for Semiotic Studies and Vice-Director of Television Programming in Milan. His publications include: *Il segno, dalla magia fino al cinema* (Bompiani, Milan 1963); *La regia televisiva* (La Scuola, Brescia 1965); *L'indice del realismo* (Bompiani, Milan 1971). Among his works as film-maker are two films produced by RAI: *La fine del mondo* and *Stregone di città*. Originally published in 1968, covering much the same ground as the *Essais* and suffering from a similar lack of terminological precision, *The Language and Technique of the Film* is still a more accessible first introduction to the semiotic study of the cinema. The book proceeds from a presentation and discussion of linguistic concepts and their applicability to film, a critique of contemporary film theories (notably those of Mitry and Pasolini), through discussion of the various systems of codification involved in the activity of filmic writing, to an interesting comparison between film-cutting and television-cutting which examines the question of realism (with reference to the work of Barthes, Metz, and Peirce via Peter Wollen). What distinguishes this book, however, is the fact that the questions of a putative cinematic language and the production of filmic-texts are considered from the other side, that of the film-maker. The discussion is also abundantly punctuated with examples drawn mainly from the cinema (notably films by Antonioni, Bergman, Godard) but also from photography and painting. *The Language and Technique of the Film* therefore constitutes a stimulating counterpart to Metz's own writings.

Since the amount of material available in English in the area of semiotics has greatly increased in the last two years, it seems appropriate at this point to suggest a reading list of the most important texts (see also the bibliographies in *Screen* v 14 n 1/2 and *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n 1, Spring 1971).



## Introductions to semiotics

Roland Barthes: *Elements of Semiology*, Cape, London 1967, and *Mythologies*, Paladin, London 1973.

Peter Wollen: *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, Secker and Warburg/BFI, 2nd edition, London 1972.

*Times Literary Supplement*, October 5 and 12, 1973, especially Julia Kristeva: 'The System and the Speaking Subject', and Umberto Eco: 'Looking for a Logic of Culture'.

See also the BFI Education Advisory Service reading list for the 1974 'Introduction to Semiotics' seminar series.

## Literary semiotics

Roland Barthes: *Writing Degree Zero*, Cape, London 1967.

Jean-Louis Baudry: 'Writing, Fiction, Ideology,' *Afterimage* n 5, Spring 1974.

Stephen Heath: *The Nouveau Roman*, Elek, London 1972.

Stephen Heath and Colin MacCabe (eds): *Signs of the Times*, Granta, Cambridge 1971.

## Critical works on semiotics

Iain Chambers: 'Roland Barthes: Structuralism/Semiotics,' *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n 6, Autumn 1974.

Brian Henderson: 'Critique of Cine-structuralism,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVI n 5, Fall 1973, v XXVII n 2, Winter 1973-4; 'Metz, Essais I and Film Theory,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVIII n 3, Spring 1975.

Stephen Heath: 'Film/Cinetext/Text,' and 'Glossary', *Screen* v 14 n 1/2, Spring/Summer 1973; 'The Work of Christian Metz,' *Screen* v 14 n 3, Autumn 1973.

Bill Nichols: 'Style, Grammar, and the Movies,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVIII n 3, Spring 1975.

Anthony Wilden: *System and Structure*, Tavistock, London 1972.

## Film semiotics

### 1. GENERAL (arranged in a suitable order for reading)

Roland Barthes: 'Rhetoric of the Image,' *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n 1, Spring 1971; 'The Third Meaning,' *Art Forum* v XI n 5, January 1973.

Jean-Louis Baudry: 'Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVII n 2, Winter 1973-4.

Gianfranco Bettetini: *The Language and Technique of the Film*, Mouton, The Hague 1973.

Noël Burch: *Theory of Film Practice*, Secker and Warburg, London 1973 (Cinema 2 series).

Daniel Dayan: 'The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVIII n 1, Fall 1974.

Umberto Eco: 'Articulation of the Cinematic Code,' *Cinemantics* n 1, January 1970; and 'Towards a Semiotic Enquiry into the Television Message,' *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n 3, Autumn 1973.

Boris Eikhenbaum: 'Problems of Film Stylistics,' *Screen* v 15 n 3,

Autumn 1974.

Guy Gauthier: 'Semiology of the Image,' translation from *Image et son* available from the BFI Educational Advisory Service (with slides), January 1975.

Stuart Hall: 'Newsphotos,' *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* n 3, Autumn 1973.

Christian Metz: *Film Language: a Semiotics of the Cinema*, Oxford University Press, London and New York 1974; and *Language and Cinema*, Mouton, The Hague 1974.

(Relevant though not semiotic works are John Berger: *Ways of Seeing*, BBC/Penguin, London 1972, Erich Gombrich: *Art and Illusion*, Phaidon, London 1960, and Erwin Panofsky: *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Peregrine Books, London 1970, especially ch 1.)

## 2. SPECIFIC FILM ANALYSIS

Raymond Bellour: 'The Birds,' translation from *Cahiers du Cinéma* n 216, October 1969, available from the BFI Educational Advisory Service; and 'The Obvious and the Code' (on *The Big Sleep*), *Screen* v 15 n 4, Winter 1974.

*Cahiers du Cinéma*: 'John Ford's Young Mister Lincoln,' *Screen* v 13 n 3, Autumn 1972 (see also Ben Brewster: 'Notes on the Text "Young Mister Lincoln" by the editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*,' *Screen* v 14 n 3, Autumn 1973).

René Gardies: 'Structural Analysis of a Textual System, Presentation of a Method' (on Glauber Rocha), *Screen* v 15 n 1, Spring 1974.

Kari Hanet: 'Does the Camera Lie? Notes on *Hiroshima mon Amour*,' *Screen* v 14 n 3, Autumn 1973; and 'The Narrative Text of *Shock Corridor*,' *Screen* v 15 n 4, Winter 1974-5.

Stephen Heath: 'Film and System: Terms of Analysis' (on *Touch of Evil*), *Screen* v 16 nn 1 and 2, Spring and Summer 1975.

Paul Willemsen: 'The Fugitive Subject' (on *Pursued*) in Phil Hardy (ed) *Raoul Walsh*, Edinburgh Film Festival, 1974.

Alan Williams: 'The Circles of Desire: Narration and Representation in *La Ronde*,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVI n 5, Fall 1973; and 'Structures of Narrativity in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*,' *Film Quarterly* v XXVII n 4, Summer 1974.

## Periodicals

*Afterimage* n 5, Spring 1974.

*Journal of Modern Literature* (Temple University) v 3 n 2, April 1973, special issue edited by Norman Silverstein on 'Film as Literature and Language,' especially S de Pasquier: 'Buster Keaton's Gags'.

*Sub-stance* n 9, April 1974, University of Wisconsin, Madison, special issue on the cinema.

KARI HANET.

Sir,

While sympathising with Tom Ryall's attempt to grapple with two aspects of *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* (Screen v 16 n 2, Summer 1975), I was irritated by certain misconceptions. Apparently trivial, they're in fact crucial.

1. 'The ambiguities of the visual image, the polysemic character of film, are recognised and' [typo for 'as?'] 'problematic features for cine-signification, but we might argue that Durnat exploits these features rather than recognising them as problems.'

If we did, we would be wrong; but why should we? The problems, and possibilities, of ambiguity have had substantial discussion in aesthetics. Apart from texts like Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and Sheila Dawson's *Infinite Types of Ambiguity* (in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, July 1965), it's inseparable from problems of pictorial representation (as per Gombrich's *Art and Illusion*) and all the problems of non-representational painting, music and aleatory art.

What surprises me is Ryall's silence about the problems which ambiguity poses for semiology and structuralism, at least in their application to the interpretation of art. I certainly object to Ryall's suggestion that establishing patterns of alternative meanings is 'exploitation'. The word is a morally pejorative substitute for 'elucidation', or 'demonstration', and I suspect that Ryall makes the substitution because he feels that *he* can't handle the problem of ambiguity. So he wants to condemn it out of existence. A procedure which ought to be alien to materialism, and smacks to me of rationalist idealism.

2. The one-dimensional rationalism underlying a certain streak in semiology reappears when he uses 'reading' as antithesis to 'speculative interpretation'. One may allow him, in a short text, to use such terms impressionistically. But unless he wishes to limit all comment on film to 'reading' (whatever that is; it begins to sound like tautology-cum-paraphrase), he has to be able to demonstrate just when 'interpretation' becomes 'speculative interpretation', and why the latter is never an appropriate activity. He

130 specifically places both 'speculative interpretation' and 'reworkings of the plot' under the same rubric ('this impressionistic trajectory'). In so doing he initiates a confusion which my text avoided. Because reworking the plot is so unusual a critical activity that no-one in their right senses would confuse it with a 'reading'. Far from 'reading', I'm substituting an alternative text, a text specifically and pointedly incompatible or at odds with what's on the screen.

How dare I? In every case these reworkings point to what *could* be in the film were it a more accurate picture of some of the social and/or sexual tensions on which it touches. I reproach many of the films with evoking but misattributing, instead of describing; with the entertainment equivalent of mystification. There are obvious analogies, as when a Freudian analyst proposes the *real* content of a dream, or when a Marxist suggests that anger appropriately felt against an exploiting class is diverted onto a scapegoat group. Both the Freudian and the Marxist are indulging in 'speculative interpretation', and quite rightly. Ryall is, of course, free to argue that social realities are irrelevant to works of art, and that only what's explicit in a dream-text has any relevance to it, but if he does he'll have ejected himself from anything remotely resembling a Marxist tradition, or a depth psychology, or indeed any normal rules of critical procedure.

Ryall is so desperate to characterise me as an impressionist and a speculator that he doesn't even bother to mention the direction of all these reworkings; *against* evasions of social reality, *against* 'spiritual' interpretations like those of Douchet (for the quality of whose intelligence I have the greatest respect), Chabrol, Truffaut, *et al.* Ryall's vocabulary might have been designed to lump me in with the bourgeois spiritualists, and to disguise the fact that socially oriented reworkings move Hitchcockology very much nearer a Marxist track, not to say on to it. But he's not interested in giving the vaguest notion of the book's actual arguments.

3. Ryall supposes that when I say 'contradictory instinctual drives, social aims and value systems', I really mean, in my blundering way, 'signs and sign-systems'. He then links this to an antithesis between *auteurist* emphasis on intrapsychic struggle and another emphasis on a director's ability to manipulate signs. But I meant what I said and I accept no such antithesis.

The point of my remark is to disagree with assumptions that fictions normally reveal the coherent philosophy of their author. I'm suggesting that they may be concerned with incoherences which the author hasn't solved (or even with incoherences in the culture around him). Thus his theme might be conflicts between altruism and the profit motive. His point would be that enlightened self-interest was not a coherent philosophy but a mystifying incoherence masquerading as a philosophy. Whether it's his personal problem

or the culture's or both is irrelevant, which is why the issue has nothing to do with auteurism. 131

When Ryall disparages the aspect of intrapsychic tensions, and reduces success to a function of sign-manipulation solely, he's talking like a behaviourist. I should counter with the proposition that an artist has to manage both levels, that either function entails the other, simply because sign-systems so intimately intermix with the stuff of consciousness (and unconsciousness). What does Ryall think Lacan is talking about? What does he think I'm talking about when I discuss, say, the ambiguity of the nun's uniform in *The Lady Vanishes*? Does he want to deny that the ambiguity of signs facilitates mystification both within men and between men? What does he think I'm doing when I incessantly connect ambiguity and *evasiveness* in Hitchcock, skill with betrayal? What he thinks is an antithesis (intrapsychic process/sign-manipulation), I think is a synthesis. Trying to oppose semiology to the psyche, he rules out the possibility of a dialectic between them. He savages any dialectic for the sake of a specialist rationalism. He writes like a bourgeois technician.

4. Ryall begins by claiming only to comment on 'two aspects' of the book, but then goes on to offer general comments as if he were reviewing it as a whole. He also introduces his own comments on Hitchcock, but with inadequate indication of where reported argument ends and his own begins. *Screen* readers will be grossly misinformed if they conclude that I think Hitchcock 'the most important director to emerge from the British film industry' (because Britain and its industry are too complex for such a category to be anything but totally idiotic), or that I agree with Truffaut's imbecilic put-down of British film production, or that I value Hollywood on the whole above Pinewood on the whole (such an evaluation would be completely irrelevant to any of my reasons for writing about art).

Because it is ambiguous as between these three functions, Ryall spares himself any obligation to give the reader any idea of the book's main propositions, or their development. But it's because he hasn't done this that he's misrepresented – and I think misunderstood – the book on every theoretical issue which he does raise.

He's right, though, to point out themes which I might well have explored more fully. Yet the questions he mentions would require my offering auteurist analyses of Hitchcock's English producers (posing another set of methodological problems), arguing out the possible career of Anthony Asquith (a demand for 'speculative interpretation' if ever there was one!), and a history of the intellectual climate of the British film industry between the Wars (parenthetically, but not, of course, impressionistically!).

I hope the terms of my answer have implied a certain respect

132 for Ryall's intellectual calibre, but I do think he operates with too simple-minded a model of aesthetics as involving 'impressionists' on one hand and semiology on the other. A secondary source of misunderstandings arises from my links with a New-Criticism-type aesthetic (I A Richards, Suzanne Langer) as distinct from a semiology-and/or-structuralism-based aesthetic (which seems to me still at its preliminary stage, and too rudimentary to contribute anything new). I don't see that the two are fundamentally irreconcilable; one problem is how little semiologists know about aesthetics.

Yours,  
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